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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

MADAME GUYON

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

MADAME GUYON

TRANSLATED IN FULL

BY

THOMAS TAYLOR ALLEN

BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE (RETIRED)

IN TWO VOLUMES

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Often as one sees her name in religious and quasi-religious publications, it has appeared to me, that those, who so freely use it, for the most part have no acquaintance with the Life of Madame Guyon written by herself. For many years the English-speaking family has been content to depend, for any knowledge of her, on Upham's defective and misleading Life, where her catholic spirit appears bound in the grave clothes of so-called Evangelical dogma. That this should be the case argues ill for the depth of religious life in those communities. Piety, doubtless, there has been, but of a shallow, superficial character, hardly veiling a robust selfhood, which keeps its votaries in perpetual movement and fuss, and sends them running over the world to pluck the motes out of brothers' eyes, forgetful of this great beam in their own. When doctors and teachers with some knowledge of her writings do seriously mention her name, it is without exception apologetically and in a tone of patronizing superiority, which shows how much they have to learn both about themselves and her.

Putting aside for the moment all consideration of her

heavenly exaltation, it may yet be seen, when the secrets of world history are opened up, that her *rôle* as forerunner of the moral and spiritual upheaval, which politically presents itself as the French Revolution, was no unimportant one. The spiritual light which shone out from her through the darkness of France was not extinguished by her persecution; and it may well be that to the latent unperceived working of that divine influence of which for a time she was the channel we owe the profound change which distinguishes modern Europe from its preceding ages. Perhaps George Sand's dying monk was not in error when he hailed the overthrow of the altar at whose foot he was killed by the preachers of *Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité*, as the opening of the Spirit's reign he had so long sighed for.

No complete translation of Madame Guyon's autobiography has, apparently, ever been published, in English. Of those in the British Museum library the fullest is an abridged translation, published at Bristol, by subscription, in 1772. A couple of years later, in Dublin, appeared an edition which differs from the above much as the Gospel of St. John differs from the Synoptics; but the Bristol translation has remained the foundation of all that has since appeared. For whatever claim to originality Upham in his most unsatisfactory Life puts forward, it is evident, from his reproducing the very mistakes of the Bristol translator, that he depended on him wholly. Quite recently the Bristol translation has been still further abridged, in a small volume published at Philadelphia in 1886.

Now, an autobiography such as that of Madame Guyon

cannot be abridged without losing much of what constitutes its peculiar charm and power for those who can appreciate it. As well clip the floating sprays and delicate twigs, with all their tender green leaves, from a beech tree, until it stands up a mere exaggerated broom of dry, stiff branches! So the abridged autobiography becomes a tasteless narrative of events, while the spiritual perfume and unction that breathe from the original phrases, and even apparent repetitions, entirely disappear. It is to breathe and drink in something of her spirit that one seeks the company of such a writer. In the translation which I now offer to the public I know I render her meaning. I hope I have been able to preserve her spirit, so that readers who are compelled to know her only through a translation may not be serious losers. For it has been to me a labour of love. Commenced as an occupation to fill up leisure hours in the Indian hot weather, the attraction of the work grew, and I could realize how far-reaching are the principles of religion enunciated and illustrated in her life. For that which shines forth with such an extraordinary lustre in her life is the same Light of which Eastern sages had caught a fleeting glimpse, and which they sought to bring down to the comprehension of their disciples. But in the East, as in the West, the materializing and externalizing tendencies of human nature rapidly made themselves felt, and the true Nirvâna, where only the self-centre is lost that the Divine Spirit may take its place and make man, as originally intended, a form to express the Divine Love and Wisdom, was forgotten, and hidden away from the vulgar in a teaching which, at the present day, seems to point to total individual annihilation. The French traveller

Bernier, who had spent several years in India at the Mogul Emperor's court, shortly before his death in 1688, incited thereto by the noise the affair of Molinos was making in France, produced from his old Indian note-books a memoir on the Quietism of India. This was published in October, 1688, six weeks after his death. He writes: "Among the different fakirs or pagan *religieux* there are those who are called Jogees—that is to say, saints, *illuminés*, perfect, or perfectly united to the Sovereign Being—to the First and General Principle of all things. They are people who appear to have totally renounced the world, and who ordinarily withdraw into some secluded garden, like hermits, with a few disciples, who, modest and submissive, are only too happy to listen to them and serve them. If food is brought them they receive it; if they are forgotten, it is said, they do without it, and that they live by the grace of heaven in fasts and perpetual austerities, and are sunk in contemplation; I say, sunk (*abîmés*), for they enter so deeply therein, that, it is said, they pass whole hours ravished and in ecstasy. Their external senses appear totally inert, and they maintain that they see the Sovereign Being, as a living and indescribable Light, with a joy and satisfaction inexpressible, which is followed by a contempt and total detachment from the world. Now here is the basis of the sect and the secret and mystery of the Kabala, which I discovered only with great trouble and artifice. Their ancient books teach that the First Principle of things is altogether admirable, and that he is something *very pure* (these are their own terms), *very clear*, and *very subtle;* that he is infinite, and can be neither engendered nor corrupted; that he is the perfection of all things,

sovereignly perfect, and (what is to be remarked) in perfect repose, in absolute inaction—in a word, in a perfect Quietism: for they hold that, being the origin and source of all virtue, of all understanding, and all power (these are still their terms), he has not, however, in himself either virtue, understanding, or power; that, on the contrary, the property and sovereign perfection of his essence is to move nothing, to understand nothing, to apprehend nothing (*rien agiter, rien entendre, rien apprendre*). For this reason, whoever desires to be perfect, and to live happily and well, must by a continual contemplation and victory over himself use all possible efforts to become similar to his Principle, so that, having subdued and entirely extinguished all human passions, he may be troubled or tormented by nothing, and, after the manner of an ecstatic, entirely absorbed in profound contemplation, he may happily enjoy this Divine Repose, or Quietism, the happiest state of life one can wish." [1]

Two thousand years before Bernier, the Greeks of Alexander's army had much the same to tell of the Gymnosophists of India—whence doubtless the hermits of Egypt imported their ideas and practices. The Mussulman mystics of Persia, of whom some account is to be found in Henry Martyn's Life, but the fullest information in a recent book, Browne's "Year Among the Persians," have evidently been fluttering round the same principle. This latest traveller has the rare merit of trying to study his subject as a disciple from within, rather than as a critic from outside; and we have to thank him for a

[1] See Max Müller's "Real Mahatma" in the *Nineteenth Century*, Aug. 1896, for account of a modern Jogee.

translation from the Bābi poetess, Karrat-ul-Ayn, in which occur the following lines :—

> "The country of 'I' and 'We' forsake;
> Thy home in Annihilation make:
> Since, fearing not this step to take,
> Thou shalt gain the highest felicity."[1]

In no dim or uncertain way, though superficially, the mystic of India and of Persia has seen that the "Self-hood," that which makes each man regard himself as the centre of the universe, and look out upon this universe solely in relation to, and as supplying nourishment for, the self-centre—what Goethe calls *das verdamnte Ich*,—is the source of all human troubles, so that true happiness can be reached only by the annihilation of this "Self-hood." Then, centred on and animated by the Divine Spirit, man shall resume his original and proper place, as a finite expression of Divine Love and Wisdom.

It is the same truth essentially, but with the clearer light thereon shed by Christ's life and sacrifice with its consequence, the help of the indwelling Paraclete, that this autobiography sets forth and illustrates; and thus we see how true are Law's words, "There is but one salvation for all mankind, and that is the Life of God in the Soul. God has but one design or intent towards all mankind, and that is to introduce or generate his own Life, Light, and Spirit in them, that all may be so many Images, Temples,

[1] In Vaughan's "Hours with the Mystics" will be found a few extracts from Sufi poets; but the criticisms of this author, redolent of the "wisdom of the den," can be accepted by no serious truth-seeker. Reason, however apt in guessing the sequences and relations of the images reflected in the intellect—that mirror of the *psyché*,—can never grasp the realities of spirit (*pneuma*).

and Habitations of the Holy Trinity. This is God's good will to all Christians, Jews, and Heathens. They are all equally the desire of his heart; his Light continually waits for an entrance into all of them; his Wisdom crieth, she putteth forth her voice, not here or there, but everywhere, in all the streets of all the parts of the World. There is but one possible way for man to attain this Salvation or Life of God in the Soul. . . . and that is, the Desire of the Soul turned to God. . . .

"Suppose this desire to be awakened, and fixed upon God, though in souls that never heard either of the Law or Gospel, and then the divine Life, or operation of God, enters into them, and the New Birth in Christ is formed in those that never heard of His name. And these are they that shall come from the East and from the West and sit down with Abraham and Isaac in the Kingdom of God." [1]

In the narrative of Madame Guyon's life are many abnormal incidents which were omitted or softened down by the translator of 1772, doubtless through regard for Protestant prejudices; yet in John Wesley's Journals may be found several not very dissimilar. It is to be hoped that readers of the present day will, thanks to the study of the occult and the recognition of psychical phenomena by large numbers, bring a more open intelligence to the perusal. Numbers, no doubt, will dismiss all such as pure hallucinations, that convenient word which, with hysterics, covers so much pretentious medical and philosophical ignorance; but each one will attribute to them just so much credit as his previous education has prepared him to

[1] "Spirit of Prayer," part i. 97-99.

afford.[1] I do not feel called upon to endeavour to extend that education, but on two matters I venture to suggest some explanations which may perhaps lessen *bonâ fide* difficulties for candid readers. I mean the terrible seven years of darkness, and the strange suffering she experienced from Father La Combe's infidelities and waverings.

Throughout, Madame Guyon regards man, as the Latin Church generally does, as composed of soul and body; but in St. Paul we find man described as body, soul (*psyche*), and spirit (*pneuma*) — a threefold being. Yet she constantly speaks of her "fond"—a word which I have translated as "the central depth." This doubtless represents the inmost essence and centre of the pneuma. Now, while we exist on this physical plane, the operations of the spirit (pneuma) are concealed from us by the limitations the psyche and body impose, and it is only the result of those operations, having come to birth as a *fait accompli*, which rises into consciousness. Thus we are spared much suffering, and, in fact, are like children who are trusted only with blunted tools while learning their use. The pain and stress of our struggles on this stage are therefore less than they must be for those who, having laid aside the body, enter upon the psychic stage of existence with the selfhood in full sway. But for Madame Guyon, even while existing still in the body, the operations of the pneuma were, I conceive, fully perceptible, not merely as results accomplished, but as struggles and tortures in

[1] The candid reader, however, will admit as a permissible hypothesis, that the fashionable opinions of this century in science or metaphysic may not be a complete measure of Reality. Where, then, Madame Guyon's story clashes therewith, the explanation may possibly be found, not in her inaccuracy, but in their inadequacy.

progress towards results. Thus in her years of darkness she experienced the continued process of destruction and gradual mortification of that selfhood, which, drawn away from every earthly object by the raptures of the Divine Love already poured into her, was yet nourishing itself from this food as a new form of spiritual selfhood. This danger and the necessary course of remedy are largely discussed by St. John of the Cross in "The Obscure Night of the Soul."

In the same way, after the intimate spiritual union with Father La Combe, all the movements of his spirit (pneuma) were perceptible to her as movements of her own pneuma; but that pneuma of hers was now identical with the Spirit of the Saviour living in her; thus, by the infidelity of Father La Combe, resisting and, as it were, pulling against the Saviour's attraction, her spirit was torn in different directions. Much that might otherwise seem difficult and obscure in what she tells will perhaps thus become intelligible, by recognizing that, after her consummation in Unity with the Saviour, she enjoyed a distinct and full perception of the operations of her spirit while actually in progress. The tremendous vivacity of these we ordinary persons, in our present state, can form no conception of. To this contrast it is probable our Saviour alludes when he says, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is least, who will commit to your charge true riches?" How can you be trusted with your full-edged tools, while you show yourselves so maladroit or mischievous with the blunt ones lent you for practice? For it is never to be forgotten that man is essentially *pneuma*, temporarily compelled to manifest its life and activity through the limitations of

psyche and body. Those who, on the death of the body, continue an existence under the limitations of the psyche, in a universe related thereto, as our physical universe is related to our physical organs, must yet, after a time, part with that also, and enter, as pure pneuma, upon the eternal inheritance they have chosen for themselves—either a life of ravishing and triumphant joy with bliss indescribable, in a society where, Self extinguished, each one continually realizes and manifests forth with an infinite variety some ever new phase and aspect of the Divine Nature, with its endless perfections, in a harmony so perfect that the happiness of each is the joy of all, and the happiness of all is the joy of each one; with capacities ever expanding and deepening to receive more, and to sink down further into the bottomless depths of the Saviour's Heart; at the Source to drink more fully of the Light which lives there as all-attracting Love, incessantly breaking forth in streams of blessing, peace, and joy, while he imparts himself to all who will receive:—or a life in the coldness, darkness, and isolation of an all-devouring Selfhood, which no ray of heavenly Light can penetrate, or of Love warm; where the Creature, having entirely and permanently separated himself from God, is shut up in the poverty of his own covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath, raging in fury and madness, to experience the contradictory workings and self-torturings of mere Desire, unsatisfied and insatiable—an Extremity of Want.

Wide indeed of the truth has the Protestant world wandered, when it can accept with such eagerness, as a solution of difficulties, "Natural Law in the Spiritual World." Pseudo-science, having, as it fancies, dethroned

God from all control of the Physical Universe, and set up in his place two fetishes,[1] has, it seems, gotten itself baptized and adopted into the Christian system, and crude generalizations of imperfectly observed and half-understood physical sequences are accepted as capable of explaining the mysteries of spiritual existence. More hopeful it would be to try to explain the vital activities and living tissues of an oyster from a microscopic examination of the lime particles in its shell. Swedenborg, a true man of science, one of the most eminent of his time, endeavoured to show how spiritual law underlies and rules the phenomena of the physical world, and a still profounder insight into the mystery of the origin of matter may be found in Law's "Spirit of Love." Illumined and guided by the light of Boehme, he shows how matter and its laws are the outward manifestation, on the physical plane, of the essential contrarieties of working in spiritual desire—the torment of spiritual nature, left to itself and working on and in itself (as was never intended), divorced from God; to manifest forth whose glories alone, as their vehicle, it had come into existence with the one qualification thereto of being in itself an extremity of want.

However much there may be in this autobiography to startle the narrow rationalism of Protestant sects, those of her own Communion, who have made themselves acquainted with the writings of St. John of the Cross, and

[1] The present age was lately characterized, by a speaker at the British Association, as "drunken with writing." Could a better illustration offer than the popular acceptance as efficient causes of two mere phrases: the one—Natural Selection—a contradiction in terms; the other—Survival of the Fittest—when stripped of the ambiguity in the word "fittest," a platitude as rank as Molière's explanation of opium effects. Doubtless the chief claim on the scientist's adoration lies in the lurking suggestion of Atheism.

the life and letters of St. Catharine of Sienna, must be well aware that these canonized saints more than bear out all which Madame Guyon relates and expounds, and, were it not for her own explanation and the further evidence of political intrigue, which is brought out in Cardinal Bausset's Life of Fénélon, and St. Simon's Memoirs, it might well be wondered why such obloquy was piled upon a person so perfectly saintly, according to the accepted standards. But all spiritual independence had left the Gallican Church. Domineered by the King, himself controlled by Madame de Maintenon, a mere tool in the hands of her director, it lent itself to the suppression of truth, and not only countenanced, but assisted in the scandalous political pressure which the French King brought to bear on the Pope and his Court, to force a condemnation of Molinos, and later of Fénélon, which otherwise could never have been procured. It would seem as if, for the second time, being offered the choice between darkness and light, this Church deliberately, and with the approval of the mass of the French people, chose darkness. The Nemesis was not long delayed. The Revolution of 1789 swept away at one stroke the faithless Church, whose candlestick had been previously removed, and the French people are still expiating their fathers' indifference to truth, by which was rendered possible, the massacres of Huguenots, revocation of the Edict of Nantes, suppression of Port Royalists, and persecution of Fénélon and Madame Guyon. In her writings spiritual religion offered itself to their consideration in no strange garb, but within the recognized forms of the Roman Communion, and every

element clothed in the approved and sanctioned doctrines of long canonized saints.

From that catastrophe all Europe is now profiting; for the Apocalyptic beast of Ecclesiastical Domination received thereby his death stroke, and though we are still under the seducing influences of the three unclean spirits who had their birth in it,—Democracy, which says boldly, Authority comes from below, not from above; Materialism, declaring the lusts of the flesh the only source of happiness; Analysis, falsely called Science, which seeks the solution of the mysteries of Life by going further and further from the Centre and Source of Life;—yet none of these can operate save by deceiving: the cruel coercive tyranny of Ecclesiasticism is at an end for ever. Without the support and ignorant bigotry of the laity it never could have prevailed.

The anonymous writer of a discourse prefixed to some copies of her Life, thus introduces Madame Guyon to his readers:—

"I had read many spiritual books of undoubted value, and I had collected one hundred and thirty folio volumes of the most esteemed Fathers of the Church. God forbid I should refuse them the tribute of veneration which is their due, but I nowhere found Madame Guyon or her writings. How happy should I esteem myself, dear reader, if my example could serve you as a compass! It is forty years since I had the happiness, decisive for me, of becoming acquainted with her divine writings. That epoch of my life shall be for ever blessed. What was not my astonishment to see an order of verities so new for me! At first I understood very little, for want of that poverty of

spirit so necessary to receive the kingdom of God and his eternal truth. On the contrary, my brain was furnished with those opinions which amuse the children of men, with those academic doctrines with which grave Divines fill their nurselings, and which they are not ashamed to call true knowledge. However, in spite of the blindness to which I had been brought by those common principles, barren for the mind and puffing up the heart, which I took for indubitable, the sweet and penetrating unction shed forth from all the holy writings of Madame Guyon, that character of truth which is its own proof, that chain of connected doctrine, that sublime truth always tinctured and tempered in the love of God, which is its end,—that divine magic attracted me and seized hold of me; rays of light pierced the denseness of my soul; a secret fire warmed, softened the hardness of my heart. Gradually my horizon grew clearer; my heart, I say, took fire, and the Light of Life melted insensibly its ice. Then I saw clearly that I had understood nothing in our holy books, but the little which is accessible to reason, which in divine things is for man only an additional source of blindness. Then the contradictions it finds there were completely removed, and a new, pure light of day raised me to the idea of that Christianity of which most men have scarcely the most elementary notion, far from conceiving its spirit."

The present translator did not derive his conception of Christianity from Madame Guyon, but drew directly from the Source, yet would he add his tribute of veneration to all that has been said of her by the writer quoted; for who can approach this divinely fed fountain with a genuine thirst, and fail to receive refreshment as from a draught of

living water? The Spirit of the Saviour, who alone lived in her, and for over thirty years, after having so perfected her that her natural and proper dwelling-place was among those dazzling white-robed ones of the highest heaven, that had come out of great tribulation, seen by the Apostle John, yet retained her on earth; not for any further purification, but that He might give to men, in these modern days, an example and illustration of a life truly hid with Christ in God;—the self-same Spirit still breathes forth from her record, and penetrates the heart of the reader who will cultivate that simplicity of mind, that docility of the little child, which is the first essential to being taught of God. For the superior person, the self-satisfied critic, it must prove a stone of stumbling. Such a one may need some centuries of providential education, with its many crushing experiences, before Pride shall be so broken as to let fall the barrier of the Will—that only obstacle throughout all the Universe which can permanently resist the Will of God: but unless he be a most perverse, obstinate son of perdition, the time will come; for it is difficult to baffle the resources of Divine Wisdom animated by Divine Love. Then he will have a right understanding of what Madame Guyon was.

The writer of the discourse alluded to above, himself apparently a Roman Catholic, does not hesitate to call Madame Guyon the Apostle of our times, and to claim for her a place next to the Virgin Mary, above all canonized saints. It is a subject for wonder as well as regret that Protestantism should have regarded her with such coldness, and should have preferred, above that spiritual life from God and in God, a self-complacent intellectualism

fast losing itself in rationalism, agnosticism, and atheistic pessimism. For Madame Guyon belongs to no Church, or sect, or nationality. Stripped of the purely accidental, due to her education and surroundings, her life illustrates the catholic, universal doctrine proclaimed by Christ, and true for Christian, Jew, and Heathen, that "God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth"—thus further defined and emphasized by St. Paul, "I live, yet not I, Christ lives in me"—the creature, NOTHING: Christ, ALL.

The work here translated was published at Cologne in 1720, less than three years after Madame Guyon's decease, which took place on June 9, 1717,under the title of "La Vie de Madame J. M. B. de la Mothe Guion, écrite par elle-même." According to "La Nouvelle Biographie," the correct spelling is Guyon. Her husband, very wealthy, was son to the engineer who had constructed the canal of Briare, for which work apparently he had been ennobled, while her family name of Bouvières de la Mothe shows her to have been noble by birth.

This narrative, commenced under the orders of her spiritual director, and meant originally only for his eye, was written before and during her first imprisonment, in the year 1688, but subsequently continued, and finally revised in 1709. The remarkable words in chap. viii., part iii., however, show that she early foresaw that it would eventually be made public. How this publication came about is explained by the original editor in his Preface.

Attention having been attracted, both in Germany and England, to the violent proceedings against Fénélon, whose

position as Archbishop of Cambrai had doubtless made him well known to numerous officers in the allied armies, curiosity was aroused to learn all particulars of the controversy, and, going to the root of the matter, certain English and German noblemen, not content, our editor tells us, with a mere perusal of such of Madame Guyon's writings as they had been able to procure, took the opportunity, after her release from prison in 1703, to visit her in person. "She confided to them the history of her life, written and revised by herself, and her intention that it should be published when God had withdrawn her from the world. The manuscript she entrusted to an English Lord, who took it back with him into England, and who has it in his possession at this moment. Seeing that God sometime ago withdrew its author, in order that there may be no further delay in giving effect to her will, I here offer to the public that same Life, from a copy carefully compared with her original manuscript."

This positive assertion of the editor (said to be M. Poiret) ought to leave no room for doubt as to authenticity; while there is the undoubted fact that an autobiography had been written by her, and, under the secrecy of confession, shown to and carefully read by Bossuet in 1694. Subsequently, in the attack on Quietism which Madame de Maintenon employed him to undertake, he drew weapons from this autobiography, which in his eagerness for a controversial victory, he garbled and caricatured, betraying thus the confidence placed in him; as, indeed, he did also with regard to Fénélon and Rancé, the reformer of La Trappe.

The writer, however, of the article in "La Nouvelle Biographie" has thought fit to repeat Bayle's gratuitous

doubts, and suggests that in its present form the autobiography is a compilation, based on that which he says she had made over to the Official of the Archbishop of Paris in 1688, and other documents. Now, a reference to the work itself will show that this suggestion is baseless: she made over no autobiographical papers to the Official, and it was subsequent to the surrender of the copies of her other writings that much of this autobiography was written.

But the reader whose spiritual taste has been cultivated and developed will make light of such cavils, and as to the genuineness of this autobiography, he will use M. Tronson's phrase, "Je le sens bien." He can discern between the didactic style of a M. Poiret—whose ideas, originating in and moulded by intellect, appeal to intellect—and the spontaneous outflow from the heart, not tied together by a logical sequence, or woven into ratiocinative cohesion, which offers itself direct to the intuition of the spirit. None but a person with Madame Guyon's experiences could have written Madame Guyon's Autobiography.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

MADAME GUYON.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

GOD ALONE.—Since you wish me to write a life so worthless and so extraordinary as mine, and the omissions I made in the former have appeared to you too considerable to leave it in that state, I wish with all my heart, in order to obey you, to do what you desire of me; although the labour appears to me a little severe in the state I am in, which does not allow me to reflect much. I should extremely wish to make you understand the goodness of God to me, and the excess of my ingratitude; but it would be impossible for me to do it, as well because you do not wish me to write my sins in detail, as because I have lost the memory of many things. I will endeavour to acquit myself as well as I can, trusting to your assurance never to let it appear to the eyes of men, and that you will burn it when God shall have drawn from it the effect that he proposes for your spiritual profit; for which I would sacrifice all things, being persuaded, as I am, of the designs of God for you, both for the sanctification of your own self, and for that of others. But I assure you at the

same time, that you will not attain this save by much trouble and labour, and by a road which will appear to you quite contrary to your expectation. You will not, however, be surprised at it if you are convinced that God does not establish his great works except upon "the nothing." It seems that he destroys in order to build. He does it so in order that this temple he destines for himself, built even with much pomp and majesty, but built none the less by the hand of men, should be previously so destroyed that there remains not one stone upon another. It is these frightful ruins which will be used by the Holy Spirit to construct a temple which will not be built by the hand of men, but by his power alone.

Oh, if you could understand this mystery—so profound it is!—and conceive the secrets of God's conducting, revealed to the little ones, but concealed from the great and wise of the earth, who imagine themselves to be the councillors of the Lord, and to penetrate the depth of his ways; who persuade themselves that they attain this divine wisdom, unknown to those who still live to themselves and in their "own" operations, "concealed even from the birds of the heaven"—that is to say, from those who by the vivacity of their lights and by the strength of their elevation, approach the heaven, and think to penetrate the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length of God! This divine wisdom is unknown even to those who pass in the world for persons extraordinary in light and in learning. To whom, then, will it be known? and who will be able to tell us news of it? "Destruction and death." It is they who "declare to have heard with their ears the sound of its reputation." It is, then, in dying to all things and in truly losing one's self as regards them, to pass into God, and to subsist only in him, that one has some intelligence of the true wisdom. Oh, how little one understands her ways, and the course she leads her most chosen servants! Hardly does one discover

something of it, than, surprised at the difference of the truth one discovers from the ideas one had formed of the true perfection, one exclaims with St. Paul, "O depth of knowledge and of wisdom of God, how incomprehensible are your judgments, and your ways difficult to know!" You do not judge things as men judge of them, who call good, evil, and evil, good, and who regard as great righteousness things abominable before God, and which according to his prophet he values no more than if they were dirty rags; who will even examine with rigour those selfhood-begotten righteousnesses, which (like those of the Pharisees) will be matters for his indignation and his anger, and not the object of his love and the subject of his recompenses, as he himself assures us when he says: "If your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Who of us has a righteousness that approaches that of the Pharisees, and who, while doing much less good than they did, has not a hundred times more ostentation than they had? Who of us is not well content to appear righteous to his own eyes and to the eyes of others, and who does not believe it is enough to be righteous in this way to be so to the eyes of God?

Yet we see the indignation Jesus Christ has exhibited, as well as his forerunner, against these sorts of persons—he whose gentleness was so infinite that it was the perfect model of all gentleness, but of a gentleness radical and coming from the heart, not of that affected gentleness, which under the appearance of the dove preserves the heart of a hawk. Jesus Christ, I say, has had only severity for these self-righteous persons, and seemed to dishonour them before men. The picture he made of them was strange, while he regards the sinners with mercy, compassion, and love, and protests he is only come for them, that it is these sick ones who have need of a physician; that while the Saviour of Israel, he is yet

come to save only the lost sheep of the House of Israel. O Love! it appears you are so jealous of the salvation you yourself give, that you prefer the sinner to the righteous. It is true, this poor sinner, seeing in himself only wretchedness, is, as it were, constrained to hate himself; finding himself an object of horror, he casts himself headlong into the arms of his Saviour. He plunges with love and confidence into the sacred bath of his blood, whence he comes forth white as wool. It is then that, all confused at his disorders, and all full of love for him who, having alone been able to remedy his evils, has had the charity to do it, he loves him so much the more as his crimes have been more enormous, and his gratitude is so much the greater as the debts which have been forgiven him are more abundant; while the righteous, supported by the great number of works of righteousness he presumes to have done, seems to hold his salvation in his own hands, and regards heaven as the recompense due to his merits. He damns all sinners in the bitterness of his zeal. He makes them see the entrance of heaven shut for them. He persuades them they ought not to regard it but as a place to which they have no right, while he believes its opening so much the more assured to him as he flatters himself to deserve it more. His Saviour is for him almost useless. He goes away so loaded with merits that he is overwhelmed with their weight. Oh, but he will remain a long time weighed down under that vainglorious burden, while his sinners, stripped of everything, are carried swiftly by the wings of love and confidence into the arms of their Saviour, who gives them gratuitously what he has infinitely merited for them.

Oh, how the former have love of themselves, and little love of God! They love themselves, and admire themselves in their works of righteousness, which they esteem as the cause of their happiness. They are, however, no sooner exposed to the rays of the Divine Sun of Righteousness,

than it discovers all their iniquity, and makes them appear so filthy that they make one sick; while he pardons the Magdalen, devoid of all righteousness, "because she loves much," and her love and her faith take for her the place of righteousness. Whence comes it that the divine Paul, who so well understood these great truths, and has so admirably described them for us, assures us "the faith of Abraham was imputed to him for righteousness"? This is perfectly fair, for it is certain this holy patriarch performed all his actions in a very great righteousness. Oh, it is that he did not see them as such, and being entirely disengaged from all of the self and devoid of its love, his faith was founded only on the future salvation his Saviour should bring him. He hoped in him even against hope, and this faith was imputed to him as righteousness—that is to say, righteousness, pure, simple, and clean; righteousness merited by Jesus Christ, and not a righteousness of his own, performed by him, and regarded as from himself. This, which will appear extremely remote from the object I proposed to myself at first in writing, will nevertheless conduct you to it insensibly, and make you see that God chooses for carrying out his works either converted sinners whose past iniquity serves as counterpoise to the exaltation, or else persons in whom he destroys and overthrows that "*own*" righteousness, and that temple built by the hand of men, so that there remains not a stone that is not destroyed, because all those works are built only upon the quicksand, which is the resting on the created, and in these same works, in place of being founded on the living stone, Jesus Christ. All that he has come to establish, by entering the world, is effected by the overthrow and destruction of the same things he wished to build. He established his Church in a manner that seemed to destroy it. What manner of establishing a new law, and accrediting it when the legislator is condemned as a criminal by the doctors and powerful of the earth,

and at last dies upon a gibbet! Oh, if men knew how opposed is the "*own*" righteousness to the designs of God, we should have an eternal subject of humiliation and of distrust of what at present constitutes our sole support!

This granted, you will have no trouble to conceive the design of God in the graces he has bestowed on the most worthless of creatures. You will even believe them without difficulty. They are all graces—that is to say, gifts—which I have never merited; on the contrary, of which I have made myself very unworthy. But God, through an extreme love of his power, and a righteous jealousy of the way in which men attribute to other men the good that God puts in them, has willed to take the most unworthy subject that ever was, to show that his bounties are effects of his will, and not fruits of our merits; that it is the peculiarity of his wisdom to destroy what is proudly built, and to build what is destroyed, to make "use of weak things to confound the strong." But if he makes use of things vile and contemptible, he does it in a manner so astonishing that he renders them the object of contempt to all creatures. It is not in procuring for them the approbation of men that he makes use of them for the salvation of those same men, but in rendering them the mark for their insults and an object of execration. This is what you will see in the life you ordered me to write.

CHAPTER II.

I was born, according to some accounts, on Easter Even, 13th April—although my baptism was not till 24th May—in the year 1648, of a father and mother who made profession of very great piety, particularly my father, who had inherited it from his ancestors; for one might count, from a very long time, almost as many saints in his family as there were persons who composed it. I was born, then, not at the full time, for my mother had such a terrible fright that she brought me into the world in the eighth month, when it is said to be almost impossible to live. I no sooner received life than I was on the point of losing it, and dying without baptism. They carried me to a nurse, and I was no sooner there than they came to tell my father I was dead. He was very distressed at it. Some time after they came to inform him I had given some sign of life. My father immediately took a priest, and brought him to me himself. But as soon as he came to the room where I was they told him that mark of life I had given was a last sigh, and that I was absolutely dead. It is true they could not observe in me any sign of life. The priest went away, and my father also, in extreme desolation. This state continued so long that were I to tell it, it could hardly be believed.

O my God, it seems to me that you have permitted so strange a course in my case only to make me better com-

prehend the greatness of your bounties to me, and how you willed I should be indebted to you alone for my salvation, and not to the industry of any creature. If I had died then I should never perhaps have either known or loved you, and this heart, created for you alone, would have been separated from you without having been one instant united to you. O God, who are the sovereign felicity, if at present I deserve your hatred, and if in the future I am a vessel prepared for perdition, there remains to me at least this consolation of having known you, of having loved you, of having sought you, of having followed you, and how willingly I accept, simply from love of your righteousness, the eternal decree it shall give against me. I will love it though it shall be more rigorous for me than for any other. O Love, I love your righteousness so, and your pure glory, that without regarding myself and my own interest, I place myself on its side against myself: I will strike where it will strike. But if I had died then, I had never loved it. I would perhaps have hated it instead of loving it, and although I should have had the advantage of never having actually offended you, the pleasure of immolating myself to you through love, and the happiness of having loved you, outweigh in my heart the trouble of having displeased you.

These alternations of life and death at the commencement of my life were fateful auguries of what was to happen to me one day; now dying by sin, now living by grace. Death and life had a struggle. Death was on the point of vanquishing and overcoming life, but life remained victorious. Oh, if it was permitted me to have that confidence, and I could believe at last that life will be for ever victorious over death! Doubtless it will be so if you alone live in me, O my God, who seem to be at present my only life, and my only love. At last they found a moment when the grace of baptism was conferred upon me. I ceased for a short time to be your enemy, O my God, but,

alas ! how soon I lost so great a good, and how disastrous for me was my miserable reason, which appeared more advanced than in many others, since it only served me the sooner to lose your grace ! As soon as I was baptized they sought the cause of these continual faintings. They saw I had at the bottom of the back a tumour of prodigious size. Incisions were made in it, and the wound was so great the surgeon could introduce his entire hand. So surprising an ailment at such a tender age ought to have deprived me of life ; but, O my God, as you willed to make of me a subject of your greatest mercies, you did not permit it. This tumour, which discharged a frightful pus, was, methinks, the symbol that you should, O my Love, discharge the corruption that is in me and take away all its malignity. Hardly was this strange ailment cured, than, as they have told me, gangrene attacked one thigh, afterwards the other. My life was only a tissue of ills. At two and a half years, I was placed at the Ursulines, where I remained some time. Afterwards they took me away. My mother, who did not much love girls, neglected me a little, and abandoned me too much to the care of women who neglected me also ; yet you, O my God, protected me, for accidents were incessantly happening to me, occasioned by my extreme vivacity, without any serious consequence. I even fell several times through a ventilator into a very deep cellar filled with wood. A number of other accidents happened, which I omit for brevity. I was then four years old, when Madame the Duchess of Montbason came to the Benedictines. As she had much friendship for my father, she asked him to place me in that house when she would be there, because I was a great diversion to her. I was always with her, for she much loved the exterior God had given me. I was continually dangerously ill. I do not remember to have committed any considerable faults in that house. I saw there only good examples, and as my natural disposition was towards good, I followed it when I

found nobody to turn me aside from it. I loved to hear talk about God, to be at church, and to be dressed as a nun. One day I imagined that the terror they put me into of hell was only to intimidate me because I was very bright, and I had a little archness to which they gave the name of cleverness. At night, when sleeping, I saw a picture of hell so frightful that, though I was so young, I have never forgotten it. It appeared to me as a place of fearful gloom, where the souls were tormented. My place was shown to me there, which made me cry bitterly, and say to our Lord, "O my God, if you would be merciful to me, and give me some days of life, I would no more offend you." You granted them to me, O my God, and you even gave me a courage to serve you beyond my age. I wished to go to confession without saying anything to any one, but as I was very small, the mistress of the boarders carried me to confession and remained with me. They only listened to me. She was astonished to hear that I first accused myself of having had thoughts against the faith, and the confessor, beginning to laugh, asked me what they were. I told him that I had up to now been in doubt about hell: that I had imagined my mistress spoke to me of it only to make me good, but I no longer doubted. After my confession I felt an indescribable fervour, and even one time I experienced a desire to endure martyrdom. Those worthy girls, to divert themselves, and see how far my budding fervour would go, told me to prepare myself for it. I prayed you, O my God, with ardour and sweetness, and I thought this ardour, as new as it was agreeable to me, an assurance of your love. This gave me boldness, and made me urgently demand that they should grant me martyrdom, because thereby I should go to see you, oh my God. But was there not in this some hypocrisy, and did I not perhaps persuade myself they would not put me to death, and that I would have the merit of death without suffering it? There must have been something of this

nature, for these girls had no sooner placed me on my knees on a spread-out sheet, than seeing them raise behind me a great cutlass, which they had purposely taken to test how far my ardour would go, I cried out, "It is not allowable for me to die without the permission of my father." They said that I would not then be a martyr, and I said this only to save myself, and it was true. Yet I nevertheless continued much afflicted, and they could not console me. Something reproached me that it had only depended on myself to go to heaven, and I had not been willing.

In this house I was much loved, but you, O my God, who were unwilling to leave me a moment without some crosses proportioned to my age, permitted that as soon as I recovered from the illness, grown girls who were in this house, one in particular, played numerous tricks upon me through jealousy. They once accused me of a serious fault that I had not committed. I was very severely punished for it, which gave me a dislike to this house, whence I was withdrawn owing to my great and constant illnesses. As soon as I returned to my father's, my mother left me, as before, to the charge of servants, because there was a maid there in whom she trusted. I cannot help here noting the fault mothers commit who, under pretext of devotion or occupation, neglect to keep their daughters with them; for it is not credible that my mother, so virtuous as she was, would have thus left me, if she had thought there was any harm in it. I must also condemn those unjust preferences that they show for one child over another, which produce division and the ruin of families, while equality unites the hearts and entertains charity. Why cannot I make fathers and mothers understand, and all persons who wish to guide youth, the evil they do, when they neglect the guidance of the children, when they lose sight of them for a long time and do not employ them?

This negligence is the ruin of almost all young girls.

How many of them are there who would be angels, whom liberty and idleness turn into demons! What is more deplorable is that mothers otherwise devout ruin themselves by what ought to save them, they make their sin of what ought to constitute their good conduct, and because they have some taste for prayer, especially at the commencement, they fall into two extremes; the one of wishing to keep young children in church as long as themselves, which gives them a strong disgust for devotion, as I have seen in many persons, who when they are free avoid the church and piety like hell. This arises from their being surfeited with a food they could not relish, because their stomach was not suited for that nourishment, and for want of power of digestion they conceived such aversion to it that, where it would be suitable for them, they will no longer even try it. What also contributes to it is that these devout mothers keep them so shut up, giving them no liberty, like birds one keeps in a cage, who as soon as they find any opening fly away and never return; whereas to tame them when they are young, one should give them from time to time a fly, and as their wings are weak and one watches them flying, it is easy to catch them again when they escape, and this little flight accustoms them to return of themselves into their cage, which is for them become an agreeable prison. I believe we should do the same with young girls. A mother should never lose sight of them, and should give them an honourable liberty. They should keep them correct without affectation. They would soon see the fruit of this conduct.

The other extreme is still more dangerous. It is that these devout mothers (for I do not speak of those who are addicted to their own pleasures, the luxuries and the vain amusements of the age, whose presence is more hurtful for their daughters than their absence: I speak of those devotees who wish to serve God in their mode, not in his, and who, to pursue their style of devotion, disregard the

will of God)—these mothers, I say, will be the whole day at church, while their daughters' one thought is to offend God. The greatest glory they could render God would be to prevent his being offended. Of what kind is this sacrifice, which is an occasion of iniquity? Let them perform their devotions, and never separate their daughters from them. Let them treat them as sisters, and not as slaves. Let them make it appear to them that they are diverted at their diversions. This conduct will make them love the presence of their mothers, instead of avoiding it, and, finding much sweetness with them, they will not think of seeking it elsewhere. We must be careful to occupy their minds with useful and agreeable things, as it prevents them filling themselves with evil things. They should each day have a little good reading and some quarter of an hour of prayer—of the affections rather than of meditation. Oh, if one so treated them, one would soon put a stop to irregularities! There would be no longer wayward daughters nor bad mothers; for these girls, when mothers, would bring up their children as they themselves had been brought up.

There would also be no more division, no more scandal in families, when uniform conduct was observed to each. This would promote union, while the unjust preferences that are shown to children give rise to secret jealousy and hatred, which augment with time and last till death. How many children do we see the idol of their house, who play the sovereign, and treat their brothers as slaves, in imitation of their fathers and mothers! You would say that the one are the servants of the others. It ordinarily happens that this idolized child becomes the scourge of father and mother, and that poor neglected one becomes afterwards their whole consolation. If people lived as I have said, they would no longer think of forcing children into religion, and sacrificing the one in order to rear the others. By that the cloisters would be freed from disorder; for none

would be there but persons called by God, and whose vocation was supported by him; while those persons who *make* the vocation of their children are cause of their despair and their damnation, through the irreconcilable hatred they preserve against their brothers and their sisters, the innocent causes of their misfortune both temporal and eternal. Oh, fathers and mothers, what reason have you to treat them so? "That child," you say, "is ill favoured by nature." For this very cause you ought to love it more and to pity it. It is you, perhaps, who are the cause of its misfortune; increase, then, your charity towards it. Or else it is, God gives it to you to be the object of your compassion and not of your hatred. Is it not sufficiently afflicted in seeing itself deprived of those natural advantages which the others possess, without your increasing its grief by your unjust and cruel procedure? This child which you despise will one day be a saint, and that other, perhaps, a demon.

My mother failed in these two points, for she left me all day at a distance from her, with servants who could only teach me evil and render it familiar to me. For I was so constituted that good examples attracted me in such a way that where I saw people doing good, I did it and never thought at all of ill; but I no sooner saw people doing ill, than I forgot the good. O God, what danger would I not then have run if my infancy had not been an obstacle to it! With an invisible hand, O my God, you put aside all the dangers. As my mother gave no sign of having any love except for my brother, and never showed any tenderness to me, I willingly kept away from her. It is true my brother was more amiable than I; but also the extreme love she had for him shut her eyes to my exterior qualities, so that she saw only my defects, which would have been of no consequence if care had been taken of me. I was often ill, and always exposed to a thousand dangers without, however, doing at that time, it appears

to me, anything worse than saying many pretty things, as I thought, to divert. As my liberty increased each day, it went so far that one day I left the house and went into the street to play with other children at games which were not suited to my rank. You, O my God, who continually watched over a child who incessantly forgot you, permitted that my father came home and saw me. As he loved me very tenderly, he was so vexed that, without saying a word to any one, he took me straight away to the Ursulines.

CHAPTER III.

I was then nearly seven years of age. Two of my sisters were there as nuns—one the daughter of my father, the other of my mother; for both my father and my mother had been married before having married each other. My father made me over to the charge of his daughter, and I can say she was one of the most capable and the most spiritual persons of her time, and most fit to form young girls. It was for me, O my God, an effect of your providence and your love, and the first means of my salvation. For as she loved me much, her affection made her discover in me a number of qualities you had placed there, O my God, by your goodness alone. She endeavoured to cultivate them. I believe that if I had always been in such wise hands, I should have had as much of virtue as I have subsequently contracted of evil habits. This worthy woman employed all her time to instruct me in piety and in learning suited to my capacity. She had natural talents, which had been well cultivated, and moreover was a person of great prayer, and her faith was very great and very pure. She deprived herself of all gratification to be with me and to talk to me, and her love for me was such that it made her find, she told me, more pleasure with me than anywhere else. If I made her some pleasant reply, more by chance than wit, she thought herself only too well paid for all her pains. In short, she instructed me so well

that, after a short time, there were hardly any things of those suited for me which I was ignorant of. There were even many persons of full age who could not have answered the questions I used to answer.

My father used often to send for me to see him, and it happened that the Queen of England came to the house when I was there. I was then nearly eight years of age. My father told the queen's confessor, if he wished for some pleasure, he should converse with me and put questions to me. He asked me even very difficult ones. I answered them so *àpropòs* that he took me to the Queen, and said to her, "Your Majesty must have the diversion of this child." She did so, and seemed so pleased with my lively answers and my manners, that she urgently asked me from my father, assuring him she would take particular care of me, intending me to be maid of honour to Madame. My father resisted and vexed her. O my God, it was you who permitted the resistance of my father, and thereby turned aside the stroke on which, perhaps, depended my salvation. For being as weak as I was, what could I have done at Court but destroy myself?

They sent me back to the Ursulines, where my sister continued her charity towards me; but as she was not mistress of the boarders, and I had sometimes to go with them, I contracted evil habits. I became a liar, passionate, undevout. I passed days without thinking on you, O my God, who watched continually over me, as what I shall tell in the sequel will prove. I did not long continue in this evil state, for the care of my sister brought me back. I loved much to hear talk of you, O my God, and I never wearied of it. I was not tired at church, and I loved to pray to you, and I had tenderness for the poor. I was naturally greatly opposed to persons whose doctrine was doubtful, having sucked in the purity of the faith with my milk, and you have always preserved this grace to me, O my God, in the midst of my greatest infidelities.

There was, at the end of the garden, a chapel dedicated to the Child Jesus. I conceived a devotion for it, and for some time every morning I carried my breakfast there and concealed it all behind his image; for I was so childish I thought I was making a considerable sacrifice in depriving myself of it. I was, however, greedy. I wished, indeed, to mortify myself, but I did not wish to be mortified, which proves how much self-love I already had. One day, when they were thoroughly cleaning out this chapel, they found behind the picture what I had carried there. They knew it was I, because I was seen going there every day. You, O my God, who leave nothing without recompense, you soon repaid me with interest this petty childish devotion. One day, when my companions, who were big girls, were amusing themselves, they went to dance over a well which, the water not being good, had been used as a cesspool for the kitchen. This cesspool was deep, and it had been covered with boards for fear of accident. When they had gone away, I wished to do as they, but the boards broke under me. I found myself in that frightful sink, supported by a little morsel of wood, so that I was only soiled and not stifled. O my Love, was there not here a figure of the state I should hereafter bear? How often have you left me with your prophet in a deep pit of mud, whence I could not get out! Have I not been fouled in this pit where I was all covered with mud? But you have preserved me there by your goodness alone. I have been soiled, but not stifled. I have been even to the gates of death, but death has had no power over me. I may say, O my God, that it was your adorable hand which sustained me in that frightful place, rather than this stick by which I was stopped; for it was very small, and the long time I was in the air with the weight of my body ought doubtless to have broken it. I cried with all my strength. The boarders, who saw me fall, instead of getting me out, went to look for the servants. Those Sisters, in place of coming to me, not

doubting I was dead, went to the church to inform my sister, who was there in prayer. She at once prayed for me, and, after having invoked the Holy Virgin, she came to me half dead. She was not a little astonished when she saw me in the midst of that sink, seated in the mud as if upon a chair. She admired your goodness, O my God, who had supported me in a miraculous manner; but, alas! how happy would I have been if this had been the only filth into which I should fall! I escaped from that, only to fall into another a thousand times more dangerous. I repaid so remarkable a protection with the blackest ingratitude. O Love, I have never wearied your patience, because it was infinite. I have wearied myself of displeasing you sooner than you of supporting me!

I remained still some time with my sister, where I retained the love and fear of God. My life was very tranquil. I grew up pleasantly with her. I even profited much during the time I had my health; for I was continually ill with diseases, as sudden as they were extraordinary. In the evening I would be quite well; the morning I was found swollen and full of violet marks. Another time it was fever. At nine years of age I was seized with a vomiting of blood so violent they thought I was about to die.

A little before this time the enemy, jealous of my happiness, caused another sister I had in this house to become jealous and wish to have me in her turn. Although she was good, she had no talent for the education of children. I can say that was the end of the happiness I enjoyed in this house. She caressed me much at first, but all her caresses made no impression on my heart. My other sister did more with one look than she with her caresses or her threats. As she saw I loved her less than her who had reared me, she changed her caresses to ill treatment. She would not even let me speak to my other sister, and when she knew I had spoken to her, she caused me to be whipped or beat me herself. I could not hold out

against this rigorous conduct, and I paid with the blackest ingratitude all the kindness of my paternal sister, seeing her no more. That, however, did not hinder her from giving me proofs of her usual kindness in the great illness of which I have spoken, when I vomited blood. She did it the more willingly as she knew my ingratitude was rather the effect of the fear of punishment than of my bad heart. I believe it was the only time the fear of punishment has acted with so much power upon me; for since then my natural character led me to be more distressed at the trouble I might cause a person for whom I entertained affection than at that which concerned myself. You know, O my Love, that the fear of your chastisement has never made much impression either upon my intellect or upon my heart. Disgust at having offended you caused all my grief, and this was such that it seemed to me, though there should be neither Paradise nor Hell, I should always have had the same fear of displeasing you. You know that even after my faults your caresses were a thousand times more insupportable than your rigours, and that I would have a thousand times chosen Hell rather than displease you. My father, informed of all that passed between my sisters and me, withdrew me to his own house. I was then nearly ten years of age.

While with my father I became still more wicked. My former habits grew stronger day by day, and I incessantly contracted new ones. Yet you guarded me, O my God, in all these things, and I cannot without astonishment consider that, with the liberty I had of being all day away from my mother, you have so preserved me that I have never done anything unworthy of your protection. I was only a very short time with my father, for a nun of the order of St. Dominic, of very high birth, and an intimate friend of my father, urgently begged him to place me at her convent, of which she was Superior; that she would herself take care of me, and she would allow me to sleep in

her room, for this lady conceived much friendship for me. As people saw only my exterior, and knew not how wicked I was, I used to please those who saw me. As soon as the opportunity was wanting, I forgot the evil which I committed, not so much from inclination, as because I allowed myself to be led away. I did not appear wicked to this lady, because I loved the church, and used to remain there a long time; but she was so occupied with her community, where there was then much quarrelling, that she could not give her attention to me.

You sent me, O my God, a species of flying small-pox which kept me in bed for three weeks. I no longer thought at all of offending you. I remained much neglected and without help, though my father and my mother believed I was perfectly well cared for. Those worthy ladies feared so much the small-pox that they dared not approach me. I passed almost all this time without seeing any one except at the hours when it was necessary to take nourishment, which a lay sister brought me and immediately retired. I providentially found a Bible in the room where I lay. As I much loved reading, I attached myself to it. I read from morning till evening. I had a very good memory, so I learned everything in the nature of history. After I was recovered, another lady, seeing me so neglected owing to the great occupation of the prioress, took me into her room. Since when I had a reasonable person with whom I could converse, I thought no more of my old habits (to which I had no other attachment than that which others gave me), I again became more devout. I was very well disposed to pray to the Holy Virgin: I do not understand how I was made. In my greatest infidelities I used to pray, and I was careful to confess often. In another way I was very unhappy in this house, for as I was the only one of my age, and the other boarders were very grown, they severely persecuted me. As to eating and drinking, I was so neglected that I grew very thin. I had still other little crosses according to my capacity.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER having been about eight months in this house, my father withdrew me. My mother kept me with her. She was for some time very well pleased with me, and loved me a little more as she found me to her taste. She nevertheless still preferred my brother to me, which was so visible, every one disapproved of it; for when I was ill and found something to my taste, my brother used to ask for it, and, although he was quite well, it was taken from me to give him. From time to time he caused me divers vexations. One day he made me climb upon the imperial of the carriage; then he threw me to the ground—he was near killing me. I, however, received only bruises, no open wound; for whatever fall I have suffered, I have never received a serious wound. It was your protecting hand, O my God, which supported me. It seemed that you were carrying out in me what you said by your royal prophet, that you place your hand under the righteous, that when he falls he may not be wounded. At other times he used to beat me. My mother never said anything to him for it. This conduct embittering my natural disposition, which would otherwise have been gentle, I neglected to do good, saying I was none the better for it. O God, it was then not for you alone I used to behave well, since I ceased to do so because they no longer had

any consideration for me. If I had known how to make use of the crucifying conduct that you maintained over me, I should have made good progress, and, far from going astray, that would have made me return to you. I was jealous of my brother, for on every occasion I remarked the difference my mother made between him and me. However he behaved, he always did right, and I always wrong. My mother's servant-maids paid their court by caressing my brother and ill-treating me. It is true I was bad, for I had fallen back into my former defects of telling lies and getting in a passion. With all these faults I nevertheless willingly gave alms, and I much loved the poor. I assiduously prayed to you, O my God, and I took pleasure in hearing you spoken of, and in good reading. I do not doubt you will be astonished, Sir, by such resistance, and by so long a course of inconstancy; so many graces, so much ingratitude; but the sequel will astonish you still more, when you shall see this manner of acting grow stronger with my age, and that reason, far from correcting so irrational a procedure, has served only to give more force and more scope to my sins. It seemed, O my God, that you doubled your graces as my ingratitudes increased. There went on in me what goes on in the siege of towns. You were besieging my heart, and I thought only of defending it against your attacks. I put up fortifications to that miserable place, redoubling each day my iniquities to hinder you from taking it. When it seemed you were about to be victorious over this ungrateful heart, I made a cross-battery, I put up barriers to arrest your bounties and to hinder the course of your graces. It required nothing less than you to break them down, O my divine Love, who by your sacred fire were more powerful than even death, to which my sin has so oftentimes reduced me.

I cannot endure people saying we are not free to resist grace. I have had only too long and sad experience of my

liberty. It is true that there are graces gratuitous and active, which have no need of man's liberty, since they are received even without a man's knowledge, who knows nothing of them till he receives them. I had so feeble a will for good that the least attack overthrew me. When the occasion no longer offered, I thought not of evil, and opened my ears to grace. But on the least occasion I gave way, and shut all the avenues of my heart in order not to hear your secret voice that called me, O my God; and, far from flying the occasion, I sought it, and gave way to it.

It is true our liberty is very disastrous to us. You maintained over me, my God, a crucifying conduct to make me return to you, of which I knew not how to make proper use; for I have been in troubles from my tender youth, either through illnesses or through persecutions. The maid who had care of me used to strike me when settling my hair, and never made me turn round except with a slap. Everything was in concert to make me suffer. But in place of turning to you, O my God, I fretted and my spirit became embittered. My father knew nothing of all this; for his love for me was so great, he would not have allowed it. I loved him much, but, at the same time, I was so much afraid of him, I did not speak to him of anything. My mother often complained of me to him, but he had only one answer, "There are twelve hours in the day; she will be converted." This harsh treatment was not the worst for my soul, although it much embittered my temper, which was very mild. But what caused my ruin was that, being unable to endure persons who ill-treated me, I took refuge with those who caressed me to my destruction.

My father, seeing I was grown, placed me for Lent with the Ursulines, in order that I should have my first Communion at Easter, when I should complete eleven years of age. He placed me in the hands of his daughter, my

very dear sister, who redoubled her cares that I might perform this action with all possible preparation. I thought only, O my God, of giving myself to you once for all. I often felt the combat between my good inclinations and my evil habits. I even performed some penances. As I was almost always with my sister, and the boarders of the grown class with whom I was, although I was very far from their age, were very reasonable, I became very reasonable with them. It was surely a murder to bring me up ill, for I had a natural disposition much inclined to good, and I loved good things; a reasonable conduct suited me. I let myself be easily won by gentleness, and my sister, without using harshness, made me unresistingly do all she wished. At last, on Easter Day I made my first Communion (after a general confession) with much joy and devotion. Until Pentecost I remained in that house, but as my other sister was mistress of the second class, she required that in her week I should be in her class. The utterly different manners of my two sisters cooled my first fervour. I no longer felt this new ardour, O my God, that you had made me taste in my first Communion. Alas! it lasted but a short time, for my troubles returned. I was withdrawn from the convent.

My mother, seeing I was very tall for my age and more to her taste than usual, only thought of bringing me out, making me see company, and dressing me well. She took a regrettable delight in that beauty you had given me, O my God, only that you might be praised and blessed for it, and which has yet been for me a source of pride and vanity. Numbers of proposals were made, but as I was only twelve years old, my father would not listen to them.

I greatly loved reading, and I shut myself up alone almost every day in order to read in quiet. What finished in gaining me entirely to God, at least, for a time, was that a nephew of my father (whose life is written in the account of foreign missions under the name of M. de

Chamesson, although his name was De Toissi) visited us on his way to Cochin China with the Bishop of Heliopolis. I was not at the house, and, contrary to my usual practice, I had gone to walk with my companions. When I returned he had already gone. They gave me an account of his sanctity, and the things he had said. I was so touched, that I was near dying of grief at it. I wept all the rest of the day and the night. I got up in the early morning and went to visit my confessor in great trouble. I said to him, "What, my Father! shall it be said that I am the only one in my family to be damned? Alas! aid me to save myself!" He was greatly astonished to see me so afflicted, and did his best to console me; for he did not believe me so wicked as I was, because at my worst time I had docility, and obeyed very exactly. I was careful to confess often, and since I went to him my life was more orderly. O Love, how many times had you knocked at the door of my heart, which did not open to you? How many times have you frightened it by sudden deaths! but that made only a passing impression. I returned at once to my infidelities. You caught me this time, and I can say you carried off my heart. Alas! what grief did I not feel at having displeased you! what regrets! what sobs! Who would not have believed, at seeing me, that my conversion would have lasted as long as my life? Why did you not take this heart, O my God? I gave it to you so truly. Or, if you did take it then, why did you afterwards let it escape? Were you not powerful enough to retain it? But perhaps you wished, in leaving me to myself, to make your mercy shine forth, and that the depth of my iniquity should serve as the trophy to your goodness. I made a general confession with a great feeling of sorrow. I told, it seems to me, all that I knew with torrents of tears. I became so changed I was not to be recognized. I would not have committed the least fault voluntarily, and they found nothing for absolution when I confessed. I disclosed

even the smallest defects, and God gave me the grace to conquer myself in many things. There was only a remnant of the hastiness I had trouble to conquer. Whenever through this same hastiness I had given trouble to any of the servants, I asked pardon for it, in order to conquer at the same time my anger and my pride, for anger is the daughter of pride. A very humble person does not give way to anger, because nothing offends him. As it is pride which dies last in our soul, hastiness is also externally that which perishes last; but a soul truly annihilated can no longer find anger in herself. She would require to make an effort to be vexed, and though she should wish it, she would feel clearly that this anger would be a body without a soul, and that it would have no correspondence with the central depth, nor even any emotion in the more superficial part.

There are persons who, because they are filled with an unction of grace and a very sweet peace from the commencement of the passive way of light and love, believe themselves to have attained this; but they are much deceived, as they will easily discover if they will carefully examine two things. The first that, if their natural character is very quick and violent (for I do not speak of apathetic temperaments), they will remark that from time to time they have outbursts in which trouble and agitation have some part, and which at that time are even useful to humiliate and to annihilate them; but when the annihilation is effected, all this disappears and becomes as if impossible. Moreover, they will experience that oftentimes there arises in them certain movements of anger, but the sweetness of grace restrains and arrests them by a secret violence, and they would easily escape if they gave it some free course. There are persons who think themselves very gentle, because nothing opposes them. It is not of those I am speaking, for the gentleness which has never been tried is oftentimes a mask of gentleness.

Therefore those persons who by themselves appear saints are no sooner tried by opposition than one sees in them a strange number of defects, which they thought dead, and which were only asleep because nothing waked them up.

I shut myself up all day to read and pray; I gave all I had to the poor, taking even the house linen to make up for them. I taught them the Catechism, and, when my father and my mother were absent, I made them eat with me, and helped them with great respect. At this time I read the works of St. Francis de Sales and the Life of Madame de Chantal. It was there that I learned that people prayed. I begged my confessor to teach me to do it, and, as he did not do so, I endeavoured to do it by myself the best I could.

I could not succeed in it, as it then appeared to me, because I could not imagine anything, and I was persuaded that without forming to one's self distinctions and much reasoning one could not pray. This difficulty for a long time caused me much trouble. I was, however, very assiduous at it, and I earnestly begged God to give me the gift of prayer. All that I saw written in the Life of Madame de Chantal delighted me, and I was so childish I thought I ought to do all that I saw there. All the vows she had made I made also; as that of aiming always at the most perfect, and doing the will of God in all things. I was not yet twelve years of age; nevertheless I took the discipline according to my strength. One day, when I read she had placed the name of Jesus on her heart, in order to follow the counsel of the Bridegroom, "Place me as a seal upon thy heart," and that she had taken a red-hot iron on which was engraved that holy name, I remained very afflicted at not being able to do the same. I bethought me of writing this sacred and adorable name in large characters on a morsel of paper; with ribbons and a big needle I fixed it to my skin in four places, and it continued for a long time fixed in this manner.

My only thought was to become a nun, and I went very often to the Visitation, to beg them to be willing to receive me; for the love I had for St. Francis de Sales did not allow me to think of other communities. I used then to slip away from the house to go to these nuns, and I urged them very strongly to receive me; but although they were extremely desirous of having me, and regarded it even as a temporal advantage, they never dared give me admittance into their house, as well because they much feared my father, who was known to love me specially, as because of my extreme youth—I was then hardly twelve years old. There was then at our house a niece of my father, to whom I am under very great obligations. She was very virtuous, and fortune, which had not been favourable to her father, placed her in some sort of dependence on mine. She discovered my intention and the extreme desire I had to become a nun. As my father had been absent for some time, and my mother was ill, and I was under her care, she feared being accused of having encouraged this idea, or at least of having entertained it; for my father so greatly feared it that, although he would not for anything in the world hinder a true vocation, he could not without shedding tears hear it said I should be a nun. My mother would have been more indifferent. My cousin went to my confessor to tell him to forbid me going to the Visitation. He dared not do this out and out, for fear of setting that community against him; for they believed me already one of theirs. When I went to confession he would not absolve me, on the ground that I went to the Visitation by myself and by roundabout streets. In my innocence I thought I had committed a frightful crime, for absolution had never been refused me. I returned so afflicted my cousin could not comfort me. I did not cease weeping till the next day, when at early morning I went to my confessor. I told him I could not live without absolution; I begged him to grant it to me. There was no penance I would not

have performed to obtain it. He gave it to me at once. I still, however, wished to be a nun, and I urgently begged my mother to take me there, but she would not for fear of vexing my father, who was absent, and she always put it off till his return. As I saw I could gain nothing, I counterfeited the writing of my mother, and I forged a letter in which she begged those ladies to receive me, making excuse, on the ground of illness, for not bringing me herself. But the prioress, who was a relative of my mother and well knew her writing, discovered at once my innocent deceit.

CHAPTER V.

My father had no sooner returned than he fell seriously ill. I constituted myself his nurse. He was in a wing of the house separated from that of my mother, who seldom came to see him, as well because she was still weak as because she feared, perhaps, a relapse. Being alone with him, I had every opportunity of rendering him all the services I was capable of, and I gave him all the marks of affection he could desire of me. I have no doubt my attention was very agreeable to him, for as he loved me extremely, all I did was very pleasant to him. When he was not looking I used to go and empty his basins, seizing the time there were no valets there, as well to mortify myself as to honour what Jesus Christ says, that he had come to serve and not to be served. When he made me read to him, I read with so much devotion he was surprised. I still continued my prayer and the Office of the Virgin, which I had not missed saying since my first Communion. I remembered the instructions my sister had given me, and ejaculatory prayers she had taught me. She had taught me to praise you, O my God, in all your works. All that I saw instructed me to love you. If it rained, I wished all the drops of water were changed into love and into praise. My heart insensibly nourished itself with your love, and my mind was occupied with remembering you. I united myself to all the good that was done upon the earth, and I

would have wished to have the heart of all mankind to love you. This habit rooted itself so strongly in me that I preserved it even in the midst of my greatest inconstancy.

My cousin was not a little useful in keeping me in these good sentiments; for, as I was often with her and I loved her, and she took great care of me and treated me with much gentleness, my spirit became again gentle and reasonable. Perhaps I fell into an extreme, for I so strongly attached myself to her that I used to follow her through the house wherever she went, for I greatly liked to be treated with gentleness and reason. I thought myself in another world. It is true children should never have near them any but reasonable persons, who are in no way passionate. This attachment appeared to me very right for a person who had been given me for my guidance; for her fortune not being equal either to her birth or her virtue, she did with charity and affection that which her present condition imposed upon her. I did not think I was committing an excess, yet my mother thought, in loving my cousin so strongly, I should love her less. The Devil so well managed with his artifices that my mother, who previously trusted me much to myself, and even, when I passed days without entering her room except at bedtime, made no inquiries as to where I was, being satisfied I was in the house, wished me to remain always with her, and would hardly ever leave me with my cousin. My cousin fell ill, and my mother took the opportunity to send her back to her own house, which was for me a very serious blow, both for grace and for nature. Although my mother thus behaved, she was none the less very virtuous; but God permitted this to try me, for my mother was one of the most charitable women of her age. If there was an excess in this virtue, one might say hers was excessive. She used to give not only what was to spare, but even the necessaries of the house. No poor person was ever sent away by her, nor any destitute one ever applied to her

without receiving help. She furnished poor artisans with the means of carrying on their work, and poor traders with the means of supplying their shops. I think it is from her I have inherited charity and love of the poor, for God gave me the grace to succeed her in this holy exercise. There was not in the town or its neighbourhood any one who did not benefit by her charity. She has sometimes even given the last pistole that was in the house, without losing or failing in confidence, in spite of the great establishment she had to maintain. Her faith was living, and she had a very great devotion to the Holy Virgin. She meditated every day during the time of a Mass. She never missed repeating the Office of the Virgin, and all she wanted was a director who would introduce her to the inner life, without which all virtues are weak and languishing. What caused me to have so much liberty as I have mentioned is that, when I was little, my mother relied too much on the care of the maids, and, when I was grown, she trusted too much to my own conduct, and, being assured I loved to be alone to read, she was satisfied at knowing I was in the house, without troubling herself further; for as to going out, she almost never gave me liberty, which is a great thing for a girl. The habit I had acquired of remaining at home was very useful to me after my marriage, as I shall tell in its proper place. My mother was not, then, so much at fault in leaving me to myself; the fault she committed was in not keeping me in her room with an honourable liberty, and not finding out more often the part of the house in which I was.

After the departure of my cousin I remained still for some time in the sentiments of piety of which I have spoken. One grace that God gave me was a great facility in pardoning injuries, which surprised my confessor; for, knowing some young ladies spoke of me unfavourably out of mere envy, I used to speak good of them when I had an opportunity. I fell ill of a double-tertian fever, which lasted

four months, when I suffered considerably, as well from vomiting as from other troubles caused by the fever. I had sufficient moderation and piety during this fever, suffering with much patience. I continued the manner of life of which I have spoken above as long as I continued to pray. About a year or eleven months after, we went to spend some days in the country. My father took with us one of his relatives who was a very accomplished young gentleman. He had a great wish to marry me, but my father, who had resolved not to marry me to any of my relatives, owing to the difficulty of obtaining dispensation, unless false or frivolous reasons were alleged, opposed it. As this young gentleman was very devoted to the Holy Virgin, and used to say her Office every day, I said it with him, and, in order to have time, I gave up prayer, and this was the source of my troubles. I still for a time preserved the spirit of piety, for I used to go and look for the little shepherd-girls to instruct them and teach them to pray to you, O my God; but this remnant of piety was not nourished by prayer. I insensibly relaxed. I became cold to you. All my former faults came back, and I added a frightful vanity. The love I commenced to have for myself extinguished what remained in me of your love. I did not entirely give up prayer without asking my confessor. I told him I thought it better to say every day the Office of the Virgin than to pray; that, having time only for one and not for both, it appeared to me I ought to prefer the Office to prayer; and I did not see, O my God, it was a trick of your enemy and mine to withdraw me from you, and a means of involving me insensibly in the snares he was laying for me; for I could have had enough time for both, having no other occupation than what I chose for myself. My confessor, who was very easy and not a man of prayer, consented to it, to my ruin. O my God, if one knew the value of prayer, and the advantage the soul reaps from conversing with you, and its importance for salvation,

every one would be assiduous in it. It is a strong place, into which the enemy can never enter. He may, indeed, attack this place, besiege it, make much noise around its walls, but, provided one is faithful not to leave it, he cannot do us any ill. Children should be taught the necessity of prayer as they are taught the necessity of their salvation; but, alas! people are unfortunately content to tell them that there is a Paradise and a Hell, that they must endeavour to avoid the latter and aim at the possession of the former, and they are not taught the shortest and easiest road of arriving there. Prayer is nothing else than the pathway to Paradise, and the pathway to Paradise is prayer—but prayer of the heart, which everybody is capable of, and not of those reasonings which are a play of the intellect, a result of study, an exercise of the imagination, which, while filling the mind with vague things, rarely and only for moments fix it, and do not warm the heart, which remains still cold and languishing. Oh, ye poor people, intellects coarse and foolish, children without reason and without knowledge, dull minds which can retain nothing, come, practise prayer, and you will become wise! Strong men, clever and rich, have you not all, great as you are, a heart capable of loving what is suited to you, and hating what is contrary to you? Love, love the Sovereign Good, hate the sovereign evil, and you will become wise! When you love any one, do you know the reasons of love and its definitions? Assuredly not. You love because your heart is made to love what it finds lovable. Is there anything more lovable than God? You know well enough that he is lovable; do not tell me, then, that you do not know him. You know he created you and died for you; but if these reasons are not enough, which of you has not some want, some ill, or some disgrace? Which of you cannot tell his ill and ask a remedy for it? Come, then, to this source of all good, and without amusing yourselves, complaining to feeble and powerless creatures

who cannot comfort you, come to prayer, to open out to God your troubles, to ask from him his graces; and above all, come to love him. No one can escape from loving; for none can live without a heart, nor the heart without love. Why amuse yourselves with seeking reasons for loving Love itself? Let us love without reasoning about love, and we shall find ourselves filled with love before the rest have found the reasons that lead to love. Taste, and you shall see; taste love, and you will be more wise in love than the cleverest philosophers. In love, as in everything else, experience teaches better than reasoning. Come, drink at this source of living water, instead of amusing yourselves with the broken cisterns of the creature, which, far from quenching, augment your thirst! Oh, if you had drunk at this fountain, you would no more seek elsewhere the means of satisfying your thirst! for you would no more have thirst for the things of earth, provided you continue always to go and draw from this source. But if you quit it, alas! your enemy has the upper hand. He will give you his poisoned waters, which, while making you taste an apparent sweetness, will deprive you of life.

It is what I did when I gave up prayer. I left God. I became that vine exposed to pillage, whose broken-down hedges admit all the passers-by to ravage it. I commenced to seek in the creature what I had found in God. You abandoned me to myself, because I had first abandoned you, and, while permitting me to be plunged in the abyss, you wished to make me understand the need I had of drawing near to you by prayer. You say you will destroy those adulterous souls who separate themselves from you. Alas! their separation itself constitutes their destruction, since, in withdrawing from you, O Divine Sun, they enter into the religion of darkness, into the cold of death, whence they will never recover if you do not draw near to them, and if, by your divine light, you do not come to illumine gradually their darkness, and by your vivifying warmth to

melt their deadly ice, and to restore life to them. I fell into the greatest of all misfortunes; for I still wandered from you, O my God, who are my light and my life, and you removed further from me. You withdrew yourself gradually from a heart which left you, and you are so good that it seems that you abandoned it only with regret; but when this heart consents to be converted, ah! you return to it with giant steps. It is an experience I have made, O my God, which will be for me an eternal witness of your goodness and my ingratitude. I became then yet more hasty than I had ever been, because my age gave more strength to my passions. I often lied. I felt my heart corrupted and vain. There was no longer any piety in my soul, but a state of lukewarmness and real undevoutness, although I still preserved the external with much care, and the habit I had acquired of behaving in church with modesty, made me appear other than I was. Vanity, which hitherto had left me at peace, seized upon my spirit. I began to spend a long time before the looking-glass. I found so much pleasure in seeing myself, that it seemed to me others were justified in finding it. This love of myself became so strong, that in my heart I had only scorn for all others of my sex. In place of making use, O my God, of that exterior you had given me as a means of loving you more, it was to me the source of vain complaisance. What ought to win my gratitude, furnished my ingratitude. I found that there was nothing but what was beautiful in my exterior, and I did not see that it covered a horrible dunghill. All this made me so vain, that I doubt if there ever was a person who interiorly carried vanity so far; for as to the exterior, I had an affected modesty which would have deceived anybody.

The esteem I entertained for myself made me discover faults in all the rest of my sex. I had eyes only to see my exterior good qualities, and to discern the weak points of others. I concealed my defects from myself,

and, if I remarked any, they appeared to me very trifling in comparison with those I saw in others, and I even excused them in my mind, picturing them to myself as perfections. The whole idea I had of myself and of others was false. I loved reading madly: I employed day and night at it. Sometimes the next day dawned and I was still reading, so that for several months I had completely lost the habit of sleeping. The books I ordinarily read were Romances. I loved them to folly. I was eager to find out their conclusion, thinking there to discover something, but I found there nothing but a hunger for reading. These books are strange inventions to ruin youth, for though one should commit no other evil but to lose time, is not that too much? I believe this was the greatest fault I committed in it. I was not prevented; on the contrary, people have a foolish idea that they teach one to speak correctly. Yet, O my God, your extreme goodness led you to seek me from time to time. You were knocking at the door of my heart. I was often seized with sharp sorrow and abundance of tears. I was afflicted at a state so different from that I had found with you, O my God. But my tears were without effect, and my sorrow vain. I could not of myself withdraw from such a disastrous state. I would have wished that a hand as charitable as powerful had drawn me out of it; but for myself, I had not the strength to do it. Alas! if I had had a confessor who examined the cause of my ill, he would doubtless have applied the remedy, which was merely to make me betake myself again to prayer; but he was content to rebuke me severely, to give me some vocal prayer to repeat, and he did not remove the cause of the ill—he did not give me the true remedy. "I was," said the prophet, "in a deep pit of mud, from which I could not get out." They reprimanded me because I was in this pit, but no one stretched to me a hand to withdraw me from it, and when I tried to make vain efforts to get out, I sunk myself the deeper,

and the trouble I had taken served only to make me see my powerlessness, and render me more miserable and more afflicted. Alas! how this sad experience has made me compassionate for sinners! and how it has shown me whence it comes there are so few who correct themselves and who emerge from that miserable state to which they are reduced, because people are content with crying out against their vices and terrifying them with menaces of future punishment! These cries and these menaces at the commencement make some impression on their minds, but a hand is not given them to come out from where they are. They make feeble efforts, but after having many times experienced their powerlessness and the inutility of their attempts, they gradually lose the will to make new efforts, which appear to them as fruitless as the first. Hence it comes that, in consequence of this, all one can say to them is without effect, though one should preach incessantly. We hear nothing else but outcry against sinners, yet no one is converted. If, when a sinner goes to confession, he was given the true remedy, which is prayer; if he was obliged every day to place himself before God in the condition of a criminal, to ask from him the strength to emerge from this condition,—he would soon be changed: that is the way to stretch forth a hand to a man, to drag him from the mud. But the Devil has falsely persuaded the doctors and wise men of the age that one must be perfectly converted in order to pray; and as prayer is the efficacious means for conversion, and they will not give it, this is the reason there is no durable and sincere conversion. It is only against prayer and those who practise it the Devil breaks forth, because he knows it is the true means of carrying off his prey from him. People may practise all the austerities they please, the Devil lets them practise them, and persecutes neither those who prescribe them nor those who practise them, but one no sooner speaks of prayer, one no sooner enters upon the life of the

spirit, than one must be prepared for strange contradictions. Who says, "a life of prayer," says, "a life of crosses." If there is in the world a spiritual soul, it seems that all the crosses, all the persecutions, all the scorn, are reserved for her. If there is in a monastery a soul of great prayer, all the ill will is for her, all the humiliations are for her—at least when the prayer is profound and true. If a soul is reputed to be one of great prayer, and things should be otherwise, and she should be applauded and considered, I say either her prayer is not true, or, if it is, that she is little advanced in it; that they are persons who walk by light and striking gifts, and not by the narrow path of faith, of renunciation, of interior death, and of annihilation; and that the prayers of these persons are only in the powers and in the senses, and not in the centre. I sometimes wander, but as I give myself up to what carries me away, I am not particularly careful to pursue the narrative exactly.

Pitiable, then, as was the state to which I was reduced by my infidelities, and the little help I had from my confessor, I did not fail to say every day my vocal prayers, to make confession pretty often, and to communicate almost every fortnight. I was sometimes in church weeping and praying to the Holy Virgin to obtain my conversion. I loved to hear speak of you, O my God, and if I had found persons to speak to me, I should never have wearied of listening to them. When my father spoke thereof I was transported with joy, and when he went with my mother on some pilgrimage, and started very early, either I did not go to bed to avoid being surprised by sleep, or I gave all I had to the maids in order they should wake me up. My father always at that time spoke of you, my God, which gave me extreme pleasure. All other pleasures were then tasteless to me. I would have preferred this to everything. I was very charitable; I loved the poor; and yet I had all the defects of which I have spoken. O God, how reconcile things so opposed?

CHAPTER VI.

We subsequently came to Paris, where my vanity increased. Nothing was spared to bring me out. I paraded a vain beauty; I thirsted to exhibit myself and to flaunt my pride. I wished to make myself loved without loving anybody. I was sought for by many persons who seemed good matches for me; but you, O my God, who would not consent to my ruin, did not permit things to succeed. My father discovered difficulties that you yourself made spring up for my salvation. For if I had married those persons, I should have been extremely exposed, and my vanity would have had opportunity for displaying itself. There was a person who had sought me in marriage for some years, whom my father for family reasons had always refused. His manners were a little distasteful to my vanity, yet the fear they had I should leave the country, and the great wealth of this gentleman, led my father, in spite of all his own objections and those of my mother, to accept him for me. It was done without my being told, on the vigil of St. Francis de Sales, 28th January, 1664, and they even made me sign the articles of marriage without telling me what they were. Although I was well pleased to be married, because I imagined thereby I should have full liberty, and that I should be delivered from the ill-treatment of my mother, which doubtless I brought on myself by want

of docility, you, however, O my God, had quite other views, and the state in which I found myself afterwards frustrated my hopes, as I shall hereafter tell. Although I was well pleased to be married, I nevertheless continued all the time of my engagement, and even long after my marriage, in extreme confusion. It came from two causes. The first was that natural modesty I never lost. I was very reserved with men. The other was my vanity; for though the husband provided for me was above what I merited, I did not believe him such, and the style of those who had previously sought me appeared to me very different. Their rank dazzled me, and, as in all things I consulted only my vanity, all that did not flatter this was insupportable to me. This vanity, however, was useful to me, for it prevented me falling into those irregularities which cause the ruin of families. I would not have been willing to do any external act that would have exposed me to blame, and I always guarded so well the exterior, that they could not blame my conduct; for as I was modest at church, and I never went out without my mother, and the reputation of the house was great, I passed for good. I did not see my betrothed till two or three days before the marriage. I caused Masses to be said all the time I was engaged, to know your will, O my God; for I desired to do it at least in that. Oh, goodness of my God, to suffer me at that time, and to permit me to pray with as much boldness as if I had been one of your friends!—I who treated you as if your greatest enemy!

The joy at this marriage was universal in our town, and in this rejoicing I was the only person sad. I could neither laugh like the others, nor even eat, so oppressed was my heart. I knew not the cause of my sadness; but, my God, it was as if a presentiment you were giving me of what should befall me. Hardly was I married when the recollection of my desire to be a nun came to overwhelm me. All those who came to compliment me the day after

my marriage could not help rallying me because I wept bitterly, and I said to them, "Alas! I had once so desired to be a nun; why am I then now married? and by what fatality is this happened to me?" I was no sooner at home with my new husband than I clearly saw it would be for me a house of sorrow. I was obliged to change my conduct, for their manner of living was very different from that in my father's house. My mother-in-law, who had been long time a widow, thought only of saving, while in my father's house we lived in an exceedingly noble manner. Everything was showy and everthing on a liberal scale, and all my husband and my mother-in-law called extravagance, and I called respectability, was observed there. I was very much surprised at this change, and the more so as my vanity would rather have increased than cut down expenditure. I was more than fifteen years—in my sixteenth year—when I was married. My astonishment greatly increased when I saw I must give up what I had with so much trouble acquired. At my father's house we had to live with much refinement, learn to speak correctly. All I said was there applauded and made much of. Here I was not listened to, except to be contradicted and to be blamed. If I spoke well, they said it was to read them a lesson. If any one came and a subject was under discussion, while my father used to make me speak, here, if I wished to express my opinion, they said it was to dispute, and they ignominiously silenced me, and from morning to night they chided me. They led my husband to do the same, and he was only too well disposed for it. I should have a difficulty in writing these sorts of things to you, which cannot be done without wounding charity, if you had not forbidden me to omit anything, and if you had not absolutely commanded me to explain everything, and give all particulars. One thing I ask you, before going further, which is, not to regard things from the side of the creature, for this would make persons appear more faulty than they

were; for my mother-in law was virtuous, and my husband was religious and had no vice. But we must regard all things in God, who permitted these things for my salvation, and because he would not destroy me. I had, besides, so much pride that if a different conduct had been observed with me, I would have been upheld in that, and I should not, perhaps, have turned to God, as I did eventually, through the wretchedness to which I was reduced by crosses.

To return to my subject, I will say that my mother-in-law conceived such a hostility to me, that in order to annoy me she made me do the most humiliating things; for her temper was so extraordinary, from not having conquered it in her youth, that she could not live with any one. There was another cause also that, from not praying, and only repeating vocal prayers, she did not see these sorts of defects, or else, while seeing them, from not gathering strength by prayer, she was unable to rid herself of them; and it was a pity, for she had merit and cleverness. I was thus made the victim of her tempers. Her whole occupation was to continually thwart me, and she inspired her son with the same sentiments. They insisted that persons far below me should take precedence, in order to annoy me. My mother, who was very sensitive on the point of honour, could not endure this, and when she learned it from others—for I never said anything of it—she found fault with me, thinking I did it from not knowing how to maintain my rank, that I had no spirit, and a thousand other things of this kind. I dared not tell her how I was situated, but I was dying of vexation, and what increased it still more was the recollection of the persons who had sought me in marriage, the difference of their temper and their manner of acting, the love and esteem they had for me, and their gentleness and politeness: this was very hard for me to bear. My mother-in-law incessantly spoke to me disparagingly of my father and my mother, and I

never went to see them but I had to endure this disagreeable talk on my return. On the other hand, my mother complained of me that I did not see her often enough. She said I did not love her, that I attached myself too much to my husband; thus I had much to suffer from all sides. What increased still more my crosses was that my mother related to my mother-in-law the troubles I had given her in my childhood, so that the moment I spoke, they reproached me with this, and told me I was a wicked character. My husband wished me to remain all day in the room of my mother-in-law, without being allowed to go to my apartment: I had not therefore a moment for seclusion or breathing a little. She spoke disparagingly of me to every one, hoping thereby to diminish the esteem and affection each had for me, so that she put insults upon me in the presence of the best society. That did not produce the effect she hoped, for those in whose presence it took place preserved for me the greater esteem as they saw me suffer patiently. It is true she discovered the secret of extinguishing the vivacity of my mind and making me become quite dull, so that I could no more be recognized. Those who had not seen me before used to say, "What! is that the person who passed for being clever? She does not say two words. It is a pretty picture." I was not then sixteen years old. I was so timid I dared not go out without my mother-in-law, and in her presence I could not speak. I did not know what I said, so apprehensive was I of vexing her and drawing upon myself some harsh words. For crown of affliction I had a maid they had given me, who was quite in their interest. She kept me in sight like a duenna, and strangely ill-treated me. Ordinarily I suffered in patience an evil that I could not hinder, but at other times I lost my control so as to make some answer; which was for a long time a source of real crosses to me and of bitter reproaches. When I went out, the valets had orders to give an account of all I did. It was then I

commenced to eat the bread of tears. If I was at table they did things to me that covered me with confusion. I betook myself to my tears and had a double shame—one, at what was said to me, the other, at not being able to restrain my tears. I had no one with whom to share my grief, who might aid me to bear it. I wished to tell something of it to my mother, and that caused me so many new crosses that I resolved to have no other confidante of my vexations than myself. It was not through harshness that my husband treated me so, but from his hasty and violent temper; for he loved me even passionately. What my mother-in-law was continually telling him irritated him.

It was in a state so every way deplorable, O my God, that I commenced to conceive the need I had of your assistance; for this state was the more perilous for me in that outside my own house, finding only admirers and persons who flattered me for my ruin, it was to be feared, at such a tender age and amidst such strange domestic crosses, that I might turn altogether to the outside world and choose the path of irregularity. You, O my God, by your goodness and the love you bore me, made a quite contrary use of it. You drew me to you by those redoubled blows, and you effected by your crosses what your caresses could not do. You even made use, at the commencement of my marriage, of my natural pride to keep me in my duty. I knew that a woman of honour ought never give umbrage to her husband, and for this reason I was so extremely circumspect I often pushed matters to excess, even to refusing the hand to those who offered it to me—and there was one occurrence which, from having pushed prudence too far, was near ruining me; for things were taken in the opposite sense, yet my husband knew my innocence and the falseness of what my mother-in-law wished to impress upon him. I say, then, these severe crosses made me return to you, O my God. I commenced to deplore the sins of my youth; for since my marriage I

had only committed one that appeared to me voluntary—the rest were feelings of vanity that I did not wish to have, or, if I wished them, my vexations counterbalanced them. Moreover, there were a number that appeared right to my defective light, for I was not enlightened on the essence of vanity. I fixed only upon its accidents. I endeavoured, then, to improve my life by penitence and a general confession, the most particular I had yet made. I gave up at once all Romances, although they were at one time my passion; it had been weakened some time before my marriage by the reading of the Gospel. I found it so beautiful, and I discovered in it a character of truth that disgusted me with all other books, which appeared to me full of lies. I even gave up indifferent books, in order to read none but what were profitable. I resumed prayer, and I endeavoured not to offend you, O my God. I felt that, little by little, your love was regaining the supremacy in my heart and banishing from it all other love. I had, however, a frightful vanity and a very great complaisance for myself, which has been my most troublesome and most obstinate sin.

My crosses redoubled each day, and what rendered them more painful was that my mother-in-law was not content with the sharp words she said to me in public and private, but for the smallest things she would continue in a temper for a fortnight at a time. I passed a part of my life in lamentations when I could be alone, and my grief became each day more bitter. I sometimes was carried away when I saw maids who were my servants, and who owed me submission, treating me so ill. Nevertheless, I did what I could to conquer my temper—a thing that has cost me not a little. Such deadly blows diminished my natural vivacity to that degree that I became gentle. The greater part of the time I was like a lamb that is being shorn. I prayed our Lord to help me, and he was my resource. As my age was so different from theirs—for my

husband was twenty-two years my senior—I saw there was no chance of changing their temper; it was strengthened with their age. I caused Masses to be said in order that you might give me the grace, O my God, to adapt myself to it. It was what I incessantly asked of you. As I saw all I said offended them, and even things at which others would have felt themselves obliged, I knew not what to do. One day, beside myself with grief—I had only been six months married—I took a knife when I was alone to cut off my tongue, in order to be no longer obliged to speak to persons who made me speak only to have matter for getting into a passion. I would have performed this mad operation, if you had not suddenly stopped me, O my God, and if you had not made me see my folly. I prayed you continually, I even communicated and had Masses said that I might become dumb, such a child was I still. I have had large experience of crosses, but I have never found any more difficult to bear than that of an unrelaxing contrariety, and while one does what one can to satisfy persons, in place of succeeding, to offend by the very things that ought to oblige them, and being still compelled to be with them from morning to evening, not daring to leave them for a moment; for I have found great crosses overwhelm and even deaden anger, but as for continual contrariety, it irritates and wakes up a certain bitterness, it produces so strange an effect, that one must practise the most extreme violence on one's self not to fly into a passion.

Such was my married life rather that of a slave than of a free person. To increase my disgrace, it was discovered, four months after my marriage, that my husband was gouty. This disease, which doubtless has sanctified him, caused me many real crosses both without and within. That year he twice had the gout six weeks at a time, and it again seized him shortly after, much more severely. At last he became so indisposed that he did not leave his room, nor often even his bed, which he ordinarily kept

many months. I watched him with great care, and, though I was very young, I did not fail in my duty. I even did it to excess. But, alas! all that did not win me their friendship. I had not even the consolation of knowing if they were pleased with what I did; never did they exhibit the least sign of it. I deprived myself of all even the most innocent diversions to remain near my husband, and I did what I thought might please him. Sometimes he tolerated me, and I thought myself very happy. At other times I was insupportable. My own friends used to say that I was indeed of a nice age to be nurse to a sick man; that it was a disgraceful thing not to make use of my talents. I answered them that, as I had a husband, I ought to share his troubles as well as his wealth. I did not let any one know I was suffering, and, as my face appeared content, they would have thought me very happy with my husband, if he had not sometimes, in the presence of people, let bitter words to me escape him. Besides, my mother could hardly suffer the assiduity I exhibited to my husband, assuring me I was thereby securing unhappiness for myself, and in the end he would exact as a duty what I was doing as virtue; instead of pitying me, she often found fault with me. It is true that, to look at things humanly, it was a folly to make a slave of myself in this way for persons who had no gratitude for it; but, O my God, how different were my thoughts from those of all these persons! and how different was that which appeared to them on the outside from that which was within! My husband had this foible, that when any one said anything against me, he was at once angered, and his natural violence at once took fire. It was God's mode of leading me; for my husband was reasonable and loved me. When I was ill he was inconsolable, even to a degree I cannot tell; and yet he did not cease to get into passions with me. I believe that, but for his mother and that maid of whom I have spoken, I should have been very happy with him; for as to hastiness,

there is hardly a man who has not plenty of it, and it is the duty of a reasonable woman to put up with it quietly without increasing it by sharp answers. You made use of all these things, O my God, for my salvation. Through your goodness you have so managed things that I have afterwards seen this course was absolutely necessary for me, in order to make me die to my vain and haughty natural character. I should not have had the strength to destroy it myself, if you had not worked for it by an altogether wise dispensation of your providence. I urgently asked patience from you, O my God. Nevertheless, I often had outbursts, and my quick and hasty natural character often betrayed the resolutions I had taken to hold my tongue. You permitted it, doubtless, O my God, in order that my self-love should not nourish itself on my patience; for an outburst of a moment caused me many months of humiliation, reproach, and sorrow. It was a matter for new crosses.

CHAPTER VII.

This first year I did not make use of my crosses. I was still vain. I lied to conceal or to excuse some things, because I was strangely afraid. I gave way to anger, being unable to approve in my mind what appeared to me such unreasonable conduct, especially in what concerned the ill-treatment from that maid who attended me. It appeared to me an unheard-of thing that they should take her side against me when she offended me; for as for my mother-in-law, her great age and position rendered things more tolerable. O my God, how you made me in the end see things with very different eyes! I found in you reasons for suffering, which I had never found in the creature, and I saw with complaisance that this unreasonable and crucifying conduct was all necessary for me. I had still another fault which was common to me and almost all other women, and arose from the love I bore myself. It was that I could not hear any beautiful woman praised in my presence without finding some fault with her, and cleverly bringing it to notice, to diminish the good they were saying of her; as if I was esteemed less when any one else was esteemed with me. This fault lasted for a long time. It is the fruit of a stupid and coarse pride, which I had in a supreme degree. What a debt I owe to you, O my God, for having observed with me the conduct

that you have! for if my mother-in-law and my husband had applauded me, as was done in my father's house, I should have become insupportable from my pride. I was careful to go to see the poor. I did what I could to conquer my temper, and especially in things which made my pride ready to burst. I gave much alms. I was exact in my prayer.

I became pregnant with my first child. During this time I was greatly petted as far as the body went, and my crosses were in some degree less severe thereby. I was so indisposed that I would have excited the compassion of the most indifferent. Moreover, they had such a great wish to have children, that they were very apprehensive lest I should miscarry. Yet towards the end they were less considerate to me, and once, when my mother-in-law had treated me in a very shocking manner, I was so malicious as to feign a colic in order to alarm them in my turn; because if I had miscarried they would have been inconsolable, so anxious were they to have children, for my husband was the only son, and my mother-in-law, who was very rich, could have heirs through him alone. Nevertheless, when I saw that this gave them too much trouble, I said that I was better. One could not be more miserable than I was during this pregnancy; for besides a continual sickness, I had such an extraordinary disgust that, with the exception of some fruit, I could not look at food. I had, moreover, continual faintings and very severe pain. I was extraordinarily ill at my accouchement. As my illness was very long and very severe, I had an opportunity of practising patience. I offered all that to our Lord, and as soon as I had a little freedom, it seemed to me I suffered with much contentment. I was very long ill from this confinement, for besides the fever, I was so weak that after several weeks they could scarcely stir me to make my bed. When I was a little better, I had an abscess in the breast, which had to

be opened in two places, and this caused me much pain. All these ills, though violent, seemed to me but the shadows of ill in comparison with the troubles I suffered in my family, which, far from diminishing, increased each day. I was also subject to a very violent headache. During this time you increased, O my God, both my love for you and my patience. It is true that, owing to my afflictions, I was so indifferent to life that all the ills, apparently mortal, did not frighten me.

This first confinement improved my appearance, and in consequence made me more vain, for although I would not have been willing to add art to nature, yet I was very complaisant to myself. I was glad to be looked at, and, far from avoiding occasions for it, I went to promenades; rarely however, and when I was in the streets, I took off my mask from vanity, and my gloves, to show my hands. Could there be greater silliness? When I had been thus carried away, which happened often enough, I wept inconsolably; but that did not correct me. I also sometimes went to a ball, where I displayed my vanity in dancing.

In our family there happened an affair of great importance as to worldly means. The loss was very considerable. This cost me strange crosses for more than a year; not that I cared anything for the losses, but it seemed to me I was the mark for all the bad tempers of the family. An entire volume would be necessary to describe what I suffered during this time. O God, with what pleasure did I sacrifice to you that money! and how often have I abandoned myself to you, to beg my bread, if you wished it! My mother-in-law was inconsolable. She told me, O my God, to pray to you for these things, but it was utterly impossible for me. On the contrary, I sacrificed myself to you, urgently praying you rather to reduce the family to beggary than permit it to offend you. I was vexed with myself for being so detached from this wealth. I excused my mother-in-law in

my mind, and I used to say, "If you had taken the trouble to watch it, as she has, you would not be so indifferent at seeing it carried off. You enjoy what has cost you nothing, and you reap what you have not sown." All these thoughts could not make me feel these losses. I formed for myself agreeable ideas of going to the Alms House, for we also lost large sums which were in the Hôtel de Ville at Paris. It seemed to me even that there was no state so poor and miserable that I would not have found sweet compared to the continual domestic persecution. It is incredible that my father, who loved me so tenderly, and whom I honoured more than I can say, never knew anything of what I suffered. God so permitted it that I should have him also opposed to me for some time; for my mother used constantly to tell him I was ungrateful, that I cared nothing for them, that I was entirely devoted to the family of my husband. All appearances in truth condemned me, for I used not to see my father and my mother a quarter of what I ought; but they were ignorant of the captivity I was in, and what I had to bear to defend them. This talk of my mother, and a disagreeable circumstance that happened, altered a little my father's friendship for me. This, however, did not continue long. My mother-in-law used to reproach me, that no afflictions had ever befallen them till I had entered their house; that all their misfortunes had come with me. On the other hand, my mother wanted to speak to me against my husband, which I could not allow.

I declare it is not without extreme repugnance I tell these things of my mother-in-law, and especially of my husband (for my husband is in heaven, and I am certain of it); I have even some scruples. I do not doubt that by indiscretions, by my provoking temper, by certain outbursts of hastiness which sometimes escaped me, I gave plenty of occasion for all my crosses, so they have not the value and merit they would have had had I been

more perfect. Besides, though I then had what is called patience in the world, I had not yet either the taste for or love of the cross, and for this reason I committed many faults. We must not regard this conduct, which appears unreasonable, with purely human eyes. We must go higher, and see God thus permitted it for my good, and owing to my pride; for had I been otherwise, I should have ruined myself. One cannot write these things with more unwillingness than I do, and if I did not fear to disobey, I declare I would not proceed further.

We continued losing in every way, the King cutting off several sources of income, besides that other of the Hôtel de Ville, which I have mentioned. Meditation in which state I then was did not give me a true peace in the midst of such great troubles. It, indeed, procures resignation, but not peace and joy. I, however, practised it twice a day very exactly, and as I had not that rooted presence of God which I have since had, I was subject to many wanderings. My pride nevertheless subsisted, and sustained itself in spite of so many things which were calculated to crush it. I had no one either to console me or to counsel me, for the sister who had brought me up was then dead—she died two months after my marriage. I had no confidence in the other. Life was very tiresome to me, and the more so because my passions were very quick; for however I tried to conquer myself, I could not avoid giving way to anger, no more than to wishing to please.

I did not curl my hair, or very little; I did not even put anything on my face, yet I was not the less vain of it. I even very seldom looked in the looking-glass, in order not to encourage my vanity, and I made a practice of reading books of devotion, such as the "Imitation of Jesus Christ" and the works of St. Francis de Sales while my hair was being combed, so that as I read aloud the servants profited by it. Moreover, I let myself be dressed as they wished, remaining as they had arranged me—a thing which saves

trouble and material for vanity. I do not know how things were, but people always admired me, and the feelings of my vanity reawakened in everything. If on certain days I wished to look to better advantage, I failed, and the more I neglected myself the better I looked. It was a great stone of stumbling for me. How many times, O my God, have I gone to churches less to pray to you than to be seen there! Other women, who were jealous of me, maintained that I painted, and said so to my confessor, who reproved me for it, although I assured him to the contrary. I often spoke to my own advantage, and I exalted myself with pride while lowering others. I sometimes still told lies, though I used all my efforts to free myself from this vice. These faults diminished slightly, for I pardoned nothing to myself, and I was very much afflicted at committing them. I wrote them all down, and I made very careful examinations to see from one week to another, from one month to another, how far I had corrected myself; but, alas! how little use was my labour, although fatiguing, because I placed almost all my confidence in my carefulness! It is not, O my God, that I did not ask you with great urgency to deliver me from all these evils. I even prayed you to guard me, seeing the uselessness of my care, and I protested to you, if you did not do it, I should fall back into all my sins, and even into greater. My great crosses did not detach me from myself. They rendered me very indifferent to temporal wealth; they even made me hate life; but they did not take away those sentiments of vanity, that woke up with strength on all the occasions that I had of appearing. They were few, owing to the assiduity with which I attended on my husband. The church, O my God, was the place where I was most seen, and where I was most beset with sentiments of vanity. It appeared to me I would have wished to be otherwise, but it was a feeble and languishing will.

The long absence of my husband, my crosses and my

vexations, made me resolve to go and see him where he was. My mother-in-law opposed it strongly, but my father having wished it, I was let go. On my arrival, I found he had been near dying. He was greatly changed by the worry, for he was unable to finish his affairs, from not being at liberty to attend to them. He was even concealed in the Hôtel de Longueville, where Madame de Longueville showed me great kindness, but as I was much remarked, he feared I would cause him to be discovered. That greatly troubled him, and he wished me to return home, playing the part of the aggrieved; but love and the long time since he had seen me overcoming all other reasons, he made me remain with him. He kept me eight days without letting me leave his room, through this fear of discovery. This was a panic terror, for it had nothing to do with his business. But as he feared I would get ill in consequence, he begged me to go and walk in the garden, where I met Madame de Longueville, who remained a long time examining me thoroughly. I was surprised a person whose piety made so much noise should dwell so upon the exterior, and appear to make so much of it. She expressed great joy at seeing me. My husband was very pleased, for at bottom he loved me much, and I should have been very happy with him, but for the continual talk my mother-in-law entertained him with.

I cannot tell the kindness that was shown me in this house. All the officials eagerly served me. Everywhere I found only persons who applauded me, owing to this miserable exterior. I was so scrupulous in not listening to any one on this point, I made myself ridiculous. I never spoke to a man alone, and never took one into my carriage unless my husband was there, although they might be my relatives. I never gave my hand without precaution, I never went into the carriages of men. In short, there was no possible measure I did not observe to avoid giving any umbrage to my husband, or any ground for my being

talked of. So much precaution had I, O my God, for a vain point of honour, and I had so little for the true honour, which is, not to displease you. I went so far in this, and my self-love was so great, that if I had failed in any rule of politeness, I could not sleep at night. Every one wished to contribute to my diversion, and the outside life was only too agreeable for me; but as to indoors, vexation had so depressed my husband, that each day I had to put up with something new, and that very often. Sometimes he threatened to throw the supper out of the window, and I told him it would be very unfair to me; I had a good appetite. I laughed with him to win him, and oftentimes he quieted down at once, and the manner in which I spoke to him touched him. At other times melancholy got the upper hand, in spite of all I could do, and the love he had for me. He wished me to return home, but I could not desire it, owing to what I had suffered in his absence. I remarked that generally after I had been to the Mass, or had communicated, it was then he was seized with the most vexatious tempers, which often lasted very long. You gave me, O my God, much patience, and you enabled me to make no answer to him, or else some very trifling thing with gentleness, and thus the Devil, who hoped only to lead me thereby to offend you, went off in confusion, owing to the singular assistance of your grace, which, despite the rebellion of nature I keenly felt, did not permit me to get into a passion.

I became quite languishing, for I loved you, O my God, and I would not have wished to displease you. This vanity which I felt, and I could not destroy, caused me much trouble. That, joined to a long succession of vexations, made me fall ill. As I did not wish to cause trouble in the Hôtel de Longueville, I had myself carried elsewhere, and I was so ill and reduced to such extremity that, after they had in seven days taken from me forty-eight pallets of blood, and they could get no more, the doctors despaired

of my life, and this state was protracted. There was no probability I could recover. The priest who confessed me, and who had much piety and discernment, for he had been an intimate friend of St. Francis de Sales, appeared so satisfied with me that he said I would die like a saint. It was only I, O my God, who was not satisfied with myself. My sins were too present to my mind, and too painful to my heart, to allow this presumption. They brought me the Holy Viaticum at midnight. There was general desolation among the family and all those who knew me. I was the only person to whom death was indifferent. I regarded it without fear. I had no grief at leaving this miserable body, whose vanity was more insupportable to me than death. My crosses greatly contributed to rendering me unconcerned at its approach. My husband was inconsolable, and was so afflicted he was near dying. When he saw there was no hope; that the disease increased as well as my weakness; that the remedies irritated it; that they found no more blood in my veins, which were drained by the profuse bleedings they had subjected me to,—on the Festival of St. Francis de Sales he vowed me to this saint, and caused many Masses to be said. It was no sooner done than I began to improve. But what is strange is, that in spite of all his love, hardly was I out of danger when he commenced to be vexed with me. Scarcely could I move about when I had to endure new assaults. This illness was very useful to me, for besides a very great patience in the midst of severe pain, it threw a great light for me on the worthlessness of the things of the world. It detached me much from myself. It gave me a new courage to suffer better than I had done in the past. I even felt that your love, O my God, was strengthening itself in my heart, with the desire to please you and to be faithful to you in my condition, and many other benefits it conferred on me which it would be useless to detail. I was still six months dragging on with a slow fever and a hepatic flux.

They thought this would ultimately carry me off. But, O my God, you were not yet willing to take me to you. The designs you had for me were far other than that. You were not satisfied with making me the object of your mercy; you willed I should be the victim of your justice.

CHAPTER VIII.

At last, after long debility, I recovered my former health, and I lost my mother, who died like an angel. For God, who willed to commence even in this life to recompense her great almsgiving, gave her such a grace of detachment, that, although she was only twenty-four hours ill, she left all that was most dear to her without grief. Many things happened during this time that I suppress, Sir, as being of no utility either in making me known to you, or for your own use. It was a continuation of daily crosses and occasions for vanity. However, I still pursued my little course of prayer, which I never failed to offer twice a day. I watched over myself, continually conquering myself, and I gave much alms. I went to the houses of the poor, and I assisted them in their illnesses. I did, according to my light, all the good I knew, being punctual at church and remaining before the Holy Sacrament, having adopted for it a perpetual adoration. You increased, O my God, my love and my patience in proportion as you increased my sufferings. The temporal advantages that my mother procured for my brother above me, at which I was no way vexed, nevertheless caused me crosses, for at home they blamed me for everything. I was also much indisposed in a second pregnancy, and even sometime ill of a double-tertian fever. I was still weak, and

I did not yet serve you, O my God, with that vigour that you soon afterwards gave me. I would have liked to reconcile your love with the love of myself and of creatures; for I was so unfortunate that I still found persons who loved me and whom I could not hinder myself from wishing to please—not that I loved them, but from the love I bore myself.

You permitted, O my God, that Madame de Ch——, who was exiled, came to my father, and he offered her a portion of the house, which she accepted, and she lived there some time. This lady was of singular piety and very spiritual. As I often used to see her, and she had a friendship for me, because she saw I wished to love God, and that I employed myself in external works of charity, she remarked that I had the virtues of the active and complex life, but that it was not in the simplicity of prayer in which she was. She sometimes dropped a word to me on this subject, but as *the* hour was not yet come, I did not understand her. She was more useful to me from her example than from her words. I saw on her face something that showed a very great presence of God, and I remarked in her what I had never yet seen in any one. I endeavoured, through my head and thoughts, to give myself a continual presence of God. I gave myself much trouble, and made no advance. I wished to have by an effort what I could not acquire save in ceasing all effort. This worthy lady charmed me by her virtue, which I saw to be far above the ordinary. Seeing me so complex, she often said something to me; but it was not time—I did not understand her. I spoke of it to my confessor, who told me the exact opposite, and as I discovered to her what my confessor had said thereon, she did not venture to open herself to me.

My father's nephew, of whom I have spoken, who had gone to Cochin China with M. de Heliopolis, arrived. He came to Europe to fetch priests. I was delighted to see him, for I remembered the good his former visit had

brought me. Madame de Ch—— was no less pleased than I to see him, for they quickly understood each other, and they had one and the same spiritual language, which was also known to the prioress of a convent of Benedictines, named Genevieve Granger, one of the holiest women of her time. The virtue of this excellent relative charmed me, and I admired his continual prayer, without being able to understand it. I forced myself to meditate continually, to think unceasingly of you, O my God, to repeat prayers and utter ejaculations; but I could not by all these various things give myself what you yourself give, and which is experienced only in simplicity. I was surprised at his telling me that he thought of nothing in prayer, and I wondered at what I could not comprehend. He did all he could to attach me more strongly to you, O my God. He assured me, if he was so happy as to endure martyrdom—as, in fact, he endured it—he would offer it to you to obtain for me a great gift of prayer. We used to repeat together the Office of the Holy Virgin. Often he stopped quite short, because the violence of the attraction closed his mouth, and then he ceased those vocal prayers. I did not at that time know what it was. He had an incredible affection for me. The alienation from the corruption of the century which he saw in me, the horror of sin at an age when others only commence to taste its pleasures (for I was not eighteen years old), gave him tenderness for me. I complained of my faults with much ingenuousness, for I have always been clear enough thereon; but as the difficulty I found in entirely correcting them made me lose courage, he supported me, and exhorted me to support myself, and he would have liked to give me another method of prayer, which would have been more efficacious to rid me of myself; but I gave no opening for that. I believe his prayers were more efficacious than his words, for he was no sooner out of my father's house than you had compassion on me, O my Divine Love. The desire I had to please you,

the tears I shed, my great labour and the little fruit I reaped from it, moved your compassion. You gave me in a moment, through your grace and through your goodness alone, what I had been unable to give myself through all my efforts. In this state was my soul, when by a goodness the greater in proportion as I had rendered myself unworthy of it, without paying regard either to your graces rejected, or to my sins, any more than to my extreme ingratitude, seeing me rowing with so much toil, helpless, you sent, O my Divine Saviour, the favourable wind of your divine working to make me proceed at full sail upon that sea of afflictions. The thing happened as I am about to tell.

I often spoke to my confessor of the trouble I had at not being able to meditate or imagine anything to myself. Subjects of prayer too extended were useless to me, and I did not comprehend anything in them. Those that were very short and full of unction suited me better. This worthy Father did not understand me. At last God permitted that a monk, very spiritual, of the Order of St. Francis, travelled by where we were. He wanted to go by another way, as well to shorten the journey as to avail himself of the ease of water-carriage, but a secret force made him change his plan, and obliged him to pass through the place where I dwelt. He at once saw there was there something for him to do. He fancied that God called him for the conversion of a man of consideration in this neighbourhood, but his efforts were useless. It was the conquest of my soul that you wished to effect through him. O my God, it seems that you forgot all the rest to think only of this ungrateful and faithless heart. As soon as this worthy monk had arrived in the country, he went to see my father, who was very glad of it, and who about that time being ill, was near dying. I was then laid up with my second son. For some time they concealed from me my father's illness, through fear for my health, yet an

indiscreet person having informed me, ill as I was, I got up and went to see him. The haste with which I had gone about after my confinement caused me a dangerous illness. My father recovered, not perfectly, but enough to give me new marks of his affection. I told him my desire to love you, O my God, and the grief I was in at not being able to do it according to my desire. My father, who singularly loved me, thought he could not give me a more solid proof of it than in procuring for me the acquaintance of this monk. He told me what he knew of this holy man, and that he wished me to see him. I at first made much difficulty, because I never used to go to see monks. I believed I was bound so to act in order to observe the rules of the most scrupulous prudence; yet my father's urgency took with me the place of an absolute command. I thought no harm could come to me from a thing I did only to obey him.

I took with me one of my relatives and went there. When he saw me at a distance he was quite confused; for he was very particular in never seeing women, and a solitude of five years, which he had just left, had made them not a little strangers to him. He was then very much surprised that I was the first who addressed herself to him, and what I told him increased his surprise, as he has since acknowledged to me, assuring me that my appearance and manner of saying things had confused him, so that he did not know if he was dreaming. He hardly advanced, and was a long time without being able to speak to me. I knew not to what to attribute his silence. I continued to speak to him, and to tell him in a few words my difficulties about prayer. He answered me at once: "It is, Madame, because you seek outside what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will find him there." On finishing these words, he left me.

The next morning he was very greatly astonished when I went to see him, and when I told him the effect his words

had produced in my soul; for it is true they were for me like an arrow that pierced my heart through and through. I felt in that moment a very deep wound, as delicious, as full of love, a wound so sweet, I desired never to be healed of it. Those words put into my heart what I was seeking so many years, or rather they made me discover what was there, and which I did not enjoy for want of knowing it. O my Lord, you were in my heart, and you asked from me only a simple turning inward to make me feel your presence. O Infinite Goodness, you were so near, and I went running here and there to look for you, and I did not find you. My life was miserable, and my happiness was within me. I was in poverty in the midst of riches, and I was dying of hunger near a table spread and a continual feast. O Beauty ancient and new, why have I known you so late? Alas! I was seeking you where you were not, and I did not seek you where you were. It was for want of understanding those words of your Gospel when you say, "The kingdom of God is not here or there, but the kingdom of God is within you." I experienced it at once, since henceforth you were my King, and my heart was your kingdom, where you commanded as Sovereign, and where you carried out all your wills; for what you do in a soul when you come there as a King, is the same which you did when you came into the world to be King of the Jews. "It is written of me," said that divine King, "at the head of the book, that I will do your will." It is what he writes at once on the entrance of the heart where he comes to reign.

I told this worthy Father that I did not know what he had done to me; that my heart was quite changed; that God was there, and I had no longer any trouble to find him; for from that moment I was given an experience of his presence in my central depth, not through thought or application of the mind, but as a thing one possesses really in a very sweet manner. I experienced those words of the spouse of the Canticles, "Your name is like oil poured

out; therefore the young girls have loved you." For I experienced in my soul an unction which, like a soothing balm, healed all my wounds, and which even spread itself so powerfully over my senses, that I could hardly open my mouth or my eyes. I did not sleep at all the whole of that night, because your love, O my God, was not only for me like a delightful oil, but also like a devouring fire, which kindled in my soul such a flame that it seemed bound to devour everything in an instant. I was all of a sudden so changed that I was no longer recognizable either by myself or by others. I no longer found either those faults or those dislikes. All appeared to me consumed like straw in a great fire.

This worthy Father, however, could not make up his mind to undertake my direction, although he had seen so surprising a change effected by God. Many reasons led him to decline it: my appearance, which gave him much apprehension; my extreme youth, for I was only nineteen years old; and a promise he had made to God, through distrust of himself, never to undertake the direction of any female unless our Lord imposed it upon him by a special providence. On my urging him, then, to take me under his direction, he told me to pray to God about it; that he would do so on his side. When he was in prayer, it was said to him, "Do not fear to take charge of her: she is my spouse." O my God, permit me to say to you, that you did not mean it. What? your spouse! this frightful monster of filth and iniquity, who had done nothing but offend you, abuse your graces, and pay your goodness with ingratitude? This worthy Father then told me that he was willing to direct me.

Nothing was now more easy for me than to pray. Hours were to me no more than moments, and I was unable not to do it. Love left me not a moment of respite. I said to him, "O my Love, it is enough: leave me." My prayer was, from the moment of which I have spoken, void

of all forms, species, and images. Nothing of my prayer passed into my head, but it was a prayer of enjoyment and possession in the will, where the delight of God was so great, so pure, and so simple, that it attracted and absorbed the other two powers of the soul in profound concentration, without act or speech. I had, however, sometimes freedom to say some words of love to my Beloved, but then everything was taken from me. It was a prayer of faith, which excluded all distinction; for I had not any view of Jesus Christ or the divine attributes. Everything was absorbed in a delicious faith, where all distinctions were lost to give love room for loving with more expansion, without motives or reasons for loving. That sovereign of the powers—the will—swallowed up the two others, and took from them every distinct object to unite them the better in it, in order that the distinct should not arrest them, and thus take from them the uniting force and hinder them from losing themselves in love. It is not that they did not subsist in their unconscious and passive operations, but it is that the light of faith, like a general light, similar to that of the sun, absorbs all distinct lights, and throws them into obscurity to our eyes, because the excess of his light surpasses them all.

CHAPTER IX.

This, then, was the prayer which was communicated to me at once, which is far above ecstasies, ravishments, visions, etc.; for all those graces are far less pure. Visions are in the powers inferior to the will, and their effect must always terminate at the will, and in the sequel they must be lost in the experience of what one sees, knows, and hears in those states; otherwise the soul would never arrive at the perfect union. What she would then have that she would even give the name of union to, would be a mediated union, and a flowing of the gifts of God into the powers; but it is not God himself; so that it is very important to prevent souls from dwelling upon visions and ecstasies, because this arrests them almost all their life; besides, those graces are very subject to illusion, for that which has form, image, and distinctness, the Devil may imitate, together with the sensible delight, but that which is detached from all images, forms, species, and above things sensible, the Devil cannot enter these. Of these kinds of gifts the less pure and perfect, and the most subject to illusion, are visions and ecstasies. Ravishments and revelations are not at all so much, although they are not a little so. The vision is never of God himself, nor almost ever of Jesus Christ, as those who have them imagine. It is an angel of light, who, according to the power which is given him by God, causes the soul to see his representation, which he himself

takes. It appears to me that the apparitions that people believe to be of Jesus Christ himself are something like the sun, which paints itself in a cloud with such vivid colours, that he who does not know this secret, believes it is the sun itself, yet it is only its image. Jesus Christ in that way pictures himself in the intelligence, and those are called intellectual visions, and are the most perfect; or that is done by angels, which, being pure intelligences, may thus be imprinted, and thus show themselves. St. Francis d'Assisi, very enlightened on visions, has never attributed to Jesus Christ himself the impression of his stigmata, but to a Seraph, who, taking the appearance of Jesus Christ, impressed them upon him. The imagination impresses itself also with phantoms and holy representations. There are, further, corporal ones; both sorts are the most gross and the most subject to illusion. It is of these sorts of things St. Paul speaks when he says that the Angel of Darkness transfigures himself to an Angel of Light—a thing that ordinarily happens when one attaches importance to visions, esteems them, dwells upon them, because all these things excite vanity in the soul, or at least hinder her from running in blind faith, which is above all sight, knowledge, and light, as St. Denis explains.

Ecstasy comes from a sensible delight which is a spiritual sensuality, where the soul, letting herself go too far, in consequence of the sweetness she finds there, falls into faintness. The Devil gives this kind of sensible sweetness to entice the soul, make her hate the cross, to render her sensual, and to fill her with vanity and love of self, to arrest her at the gifts of God, and to hinder her from following Jesus Christ by renunciation and death to all things. Distinct interior utterances are also very subject to illusion. The Devil forms many of them, and, though they should be from the good angel—for God never speaks in this way—they do not always mean all that they seem to say, and very seldom does one see that happen which is in this way

spoken; for when God sends this kind of message by his angels, he understands things in his way, and we take them in ours, and it is this which misleads us. The immediate utterance of God is none other than the expression of his Word in the soul — speech substantial, which has no sound or articulation; speech vivifying and operative, as it is written, "He spoke, and they are made;" speech which is never for a moment mute or fruitless; speech which never ceases in the centre of the soul when she is fitted for it, and which returns as pure to its principle as it left it; speech where there is never any mistake; speech which makes Jesus Christ become the life of the soul, since it is none other than himself as the Word; speech which has a wonderful efficacy, not only in the soul where it is received, but which communicates itself to other souls through that one, as a divine germ which makes them fructify for eternal life; speech always mute and always eloquent; speech that is none other than yourself, O my God, the Word made flesh; speech which is the kiss of the mouth, and the union, immediate and essential, that you are, infinitely elevated above those utterances that are created, limited, and intelligible.

Revelations of the future are also very dangerous, and the Devil can counterfeit them with auguries, as he once did in the heathen temples, where he rendered oracles. Even though they should be from God through the ministry of his angels, we must get beyond them, without dwelling upon them, because we do not understand what they signify, true revelations being always very obscure. A further reason is that this amuses the soul extremely, hinders her from living in total abandonment to the Divine Providence, gives false assurances and frivolous hopes, fills the mind with future things, and hinders from dying to all and passing beyond all things to follow Jesus Christ, naked, despoiled of all.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, of which St. Paul speaks,

is very different from all that. It is manifested to the soul when the eternal Word is communicated to her—revelation which makes us become second Jesus Christs on earth through participation, and which brings to pass that he expresses himself in us; it is this revelation which is always true, and which the Devil cannot counterfeit.

Ravishments come from another principle. God attracts the soul powerfully to make her go out of herself and to absorb her in him; and of all the gifts I have described, it is the most perfect. But the soul being still arrested by her self-hood, she can not go out of herself, so that being attracted on the one hand, and kept back on the other, it is this which operates the ravishment, or flight of the spirit, which is more violent than ecstasy, and sometimes raises the body from the earth. However, that which men admire so extraordinarily is an imperfection and a defect in the creature.

True ravishment and perfect ecstasy are operated by total annihilation, where the soul, losing all self-hood, passes into God without effort and without violence, as into the place which is proper and natural to her. For God is the centre of the soul, and when once the soul is disengaged from the self-hood which arrested her in herself or in other creatures, she infallibly passes into God, where she dwells hidden with Jesus Christ. But this ecstasy is operated only by simple faith, death to all things created, even to the gifts of God, which, being creatures, hinder the soul from falling into the One uncreated. It is for this reason, I say, it is of great importance to make her pass beyond all his gifts, howsoever sublime they may appear, because, as long as the soul dwells in them, she does not veritably renounce herself, and so never passes into God himself, although she may be in those gifts in a very sublime manner. But resting thus in the gifts, she loses the real enjoyment of the Giver, which is an inestimable loss.

Through an inconceivable goodness, O my God, you introduced me into a state very pure, very firm, and very solid. You took possession of my will, and you there established your throne, and in order that I should not let myself aim at those gifts and withdraw myself from your love, you put me at once into a union of the powers and into a continual adherence to you. I was unable to do anything else but to love you with a love as profound as it was tranquil, which absorbed everything else. Souls that are taken this way are the most favoured, and they have a shorter road to travel. It is true when you advance them so quickly, O my God, they must expect violent crosses and cruel deaths, especially if they are from the first touched with much faith, abandonment, pure love, disinterestedness, and love of the sole interest of God alone, without any self-regard. These were the dispositions you from the first placed in me, with so vehement a desire of suffering for you, that I was quite languishing from it. I was on a sudden disgusted with all creatures; all that was not my Love was insupportable to me; the cross I had till then borne through resignation became my delight and the object of my complaisance.

CHAPTER X.

I wrote all this to that worthy Father, who was filled with joy and astonishment. O God, what penances did not the love of suffering make me practise! I practised all the austerities I could imagine, but all was too feeble to satisfy the desire I had of suffering. Although my body was very delicate, the instruments of penance tore me without causing me pain, as it appeared to me. Every day I took long scourgings, which were with iron points. They drew much blood from me, and bruised me, but they did not satisfy me, and I regarded them with scorn and indignation, for they could not content me; and as I had little strength, and my chest was extremely delicate, I wearied my arms and lost my voice without hurting myself. I wore girdles of hair and iron points. The former appeared to me a play of self-love, and the latter caused me extreme pain, putting on and taking off, and yet, when I had them on, they did not cause me pain. I tore myself with brambles, thorns, and nettles, which I kept on me. The pain of these latter caused my heart to fail, and entirely deprived me of sleep, without my being able to remain sitting or lying, in consequence of the points remaining in my flesh. It was these last I used when I could get them, for they satisfied me more than any. I very often kept absinthe in my mouth, colocynth in my food; although I ate so little that I am astonished how I could live; besides, I was always ill or

languishing. If I walked, I placed stones in my shoes. It was, O my God, what you inspired me from the first to do, as well as to deprive myself of all the most innocent gratifications. All that could flatter my taste was refused to it. All that was most disagreeable to it was given to it.

My stomach, which up to this time was so delicate that it would be most violently upset at the least dirt, no longer dared manifest a dislike, but it saw itself at once compelled to take what made it ready to die, until it ceased to have any dislike. My taste, which up to that could hardly eat anything, was forced to eat everything without distinguishing, until it seemed to be unable even to make a choice. I did not do this through practice, nor study, nor with premeditation. You were continually in me, O my God, and you were so severe in your exactions that you did not allow me to pass the least thing. When I thought to do something, you suddenly stopped me, and made me do, without thinking of it, all your wills and all that was repugnant to my senses, until they were so supple that they had not the least inclination nor the least repugnance. I dressed the wounds of all who came to me, and gave remedies to the sick. This mortification lasted for a long time, but as soon as my disgust ceased, and took alike the most horrible things and the best, the thought of it was entirely taken away from me, and I have since paid no attention to it; for I did nothing of myself, but I allowed myself to be led by my King, who governed all as Sovereign. For many years I practised the former austerities, but as for these things, in less than a year my senses were reduced to subjection. Nothing extinguishes them so quickly as to refuse them all they desire, and to give them what they dislike. Nothing else kills so effectually; and austerities, however great they be, if they are not accompanied by what I have just said, still leave the senses in vigour and never deaden them, but this, joined with concentration, entirely deprives them of life.

When the worthy Father, whom I have mentioned, asked me how I loved God, I told him that I loved him more than the most passionate lover loved his mistress; that this comparison was yet improper, since the love of creatures can never attain to that either in force or depth. This love was so continual, and always occupied me, and so powerful, I could not think of anything else. This profound stroke, this delicious and amorous wound, was inflicted on me on the Magdalen's Day, 1668; and that Father, who was a very good preacher, had been asked to preach in my parish, which was under the invocation of the Magdalen. He made three admirable sermons on this subject. I then perceived an effect which his sermons produced on me, namely, that I could hardly hear the words and what was said; they at once made impression on my heart, and so powerfully absorbed me in God, that I could neither open my eyes nor hear what was said. To hear your name mentioned, O my God, or your love, was enough to throw me into profound prayer, and I experienced that your word made an impression directly on my heart, and that it produced all its effect without the intervention of reflection and intellect; and I have ever since experienced this, although in a different manner, according to the different degrees and states through which I have passed. It was, then, more perceptible to me. I could hardly any more pronounce vocal prayers.

That absorption in God in which I was, absorbed everything. I could no more see the saints or the Holy Virgin out of God, but I saw them all in him, without being able to distinguish them from him, save with trouble, and although I tenderly loved certain saints, as St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Magdalen, St. Theresa, all those who were spiritual, I could not yet make distinctions in them, nor invoke them out of God.

The 2nd of August the same year, which was only some weeks after my wound, the Fête of Notre Dame de Portion-

cule was celebrated in the convent in which this worthy Father, my director, was. I went in the morning to gain the indulgences. I was greatly surprised when I saw I could not succeed. I used every effort for that purpose, but in vain. I remained more than five hours continuously in the church without any advance. I was penetrated by a ray of pure love, so living that I could not make up my mind to shorten the pains due to my sins by indulgences. If they had brought penalties and crosses I would have gained them. I said to you, O my Love, "I wish to suffer for you; do not shorten my pains; it would be to shorten my pleasures. I only find them in suffering for you. Indulgences are good for those who do not know the value of suffering, who do not wish that your divine justice should be satisfied, and who, having a mercenary soul, are less afraid of displeasing you than apprehensive of the penalty which is attached to sin." But fearing I might be mistaken and commit a fault in not gaining indulgences—for I had never heard tell that one might be in this state—I made new efforts to gain them, but uselessly. At last, not knowing what to do, I said to our Lord, "If it is absolutely necessary to gain indulgences, transfer the penalties of the other life into this." As soon as I returned home, I wrote to that worthy Father an account of my disposition and my feelings, with so much facility and such ease of expression that, when preaching that day, he made it the third part of his sermon, repeating word for word what I had written.

I gave up all society. I renounced for ever games and amusements, the dance, and all useless promenades. Nearly two years before I had given up curling my hair. I was, however, very well dressed, for my husband wished it so. My only diversion was to snatch moments to be alone with you, O my only Love. All other pleasure was for me a pain, not a pleasure. I did not lose your presence, which was given me by a divine and continual influx, not, as I had imagined, through an effort of the head, nor through

thinking of you, my divine Love, but in the depths of the will, where I tasted with ineffable sweetness the real enjoyment of the object loved—not, however, as afterwards, through an essential union, but through a true union in the will, which made me taste by happy experience that the soul is created to enjoy you, O my God. This union is the most perfect of all those which are operated in the powers. Its effect is also much greater, for the unions of the other powers enlighten the intellect and absorb the memory, but if they are not accompanied with this, they are of little use, because they produce only temporary effects. The union of the will carries with it, in essence and in reality, what the others have only in distinction. Moreover, it submits the soul to her God, conforms her to all his wills, gradually kills in her all "*own*" will, and at last, drawing with it the other powers by means of charity, of which it is full, gradually makes them unite in that centre, and there lose themselves so far as their operation is "*own*" and natural.

This loss is called "Annihilation of the powers," which must not be understood of a physical annihilation—that would be ridiculous, but they appear annihilated as regards us, although they still remain subsisting. This annihilation or loss of the powers takes place in this way: In proportion as Charity fills and inflames the Will in the manner we have said, this Charity becomes so powerful that it gradually overcomes all the activity of this Will to subject it to that of God, so that when the soul is docile in allowing herself to be perfected and purified by it, and to be emptied of all that she has of the "*own*" and *opposed* to the will of God, she finds herself gradually void of all "*own*" will, and placed in a holy indifference, to will only that which God does and wills. This never can be consummated through the activity of our Will, even though it should be employed in continual resignations, because they are so many "*own*" acts, which, although very virtuous,

make the Will still subsist in itself, and consequently hold it in multiplicity, in distinction, in unlikeness with that of God. But when the soul remains submissive, and only suffers freely and voluntarily, bringing her concurrence, which is her submission, to allow herself to be conquered and destroyed by the activity of Charity,—this, while absorbing the Will in itself, perfects it in that of God, first purifying it from all restriction, unlikeness, and "*ownness*."

It is the same with the two other powers, where, by means of Charity, the two other theological virtues are introduced. Faith seizes so powerfully on the Understanding that it makes it die away to all reasoning, to all distinct light, to all particular illuminations, be they the most sublime; which shows how much visions, revelations, ecstasies, etc., are contrary to this, and hinder the loss of the soul in God, although in this way she may appear lost for moments; but it is not a true loss, since the soul which is truly lost in God never recovers herself. It is rather a simple absorption, if the thing is in the will, or a dazzling if it is in the intellect, than a loss. I say, then, that Faith makes the soul lose all distinct light, and absorbs her while conquering, to place her in its light, which is above all light—a light general and indistinct, which appears darkness to the self-hood on which it shines, because its excessive clearness prevents one from discerning or recognizing it; as we are unable to discern the sun and his light, although by means of this light we so perfectly discern objects that it even hinders us from making mistakes. As we see that the sun absorbs in his general light all the little distinct lights of the stars, but that these little lights in themselves are very easily discerned, without, however, being able to give light to us; in the same way, these visions, ecstasies, etc., are very well discerned, owing to their smallness of extent. But yet, while making themselves distinct, they cannot, however, place us in the truth, nor make us see objects

such as they are; on the contrary, they would rather mislead us by their false light. It is similar with all lights which are not those of passive Faith—infused light—Faith the gift of the Holy Spirit, which has the power to undeceive the intellect, and, while obscuring the "*own*" lights of the Understanding, to place it in the light of truth; which, although less satisfying for it, is, however, a thousand times more sure than any other, and is properly the true light of this life, until Jesus Christ, the eternal Light, arises in the soul and enlightens her with himself—"He who enlightens every man coming into the world" with the new life in God. This is abstruse, but I allow myself to be carried away by the spirit who makes me write.

In the same way, the Memory finds itself conquered and absorbed by Hope, and at last everything loses itself in pure Charity, which absorbs the whole soul, through means of the Will that, as sovereign of the powers, has the ability to destroy the others in itself, like as Charity, queen of the virtues, reunites in itself all the other virtues. This reunion which then takes place is called Unity, central union, because everything finds itself united through the will and charity in the centre of the soul and in God our ultimate end, according to those words of St. John, "He who dwells in charity, dwells in God; for God is charity." This union of my will to yours, O my God, and this ineffable presence, was so powerful and so sweet at the same time, that I could not wish to resist it, nor to defend myself from it. This dear Possessor of my heart made me see even my smallest faults.

CHAPTER XI.

My senses were, as I have said, under a continual mortification, and I gave them no liberty; for it should be known that, in order to kill them utterly, one must during a certain time give them no respite, until they are entirely dead. Otherwise they are in danger of never dying, as happens with persons who are content to practise great external austerities, and who nevertheless give their senses certain indulgences, which they call innocent and necessary, and thereby they give them life; for it is not austerities, however great they be, which make the senses die. We have seen very ascetic persons feel their revolts all their life. What more effectually destroys them is to refuse them generally all that pleases them and to give them all which is disagreeable to them, and this without relaxation and as long as is necessary, to render them void of appetite and repugnance. But if before that one pretends to give them a little relaxation, one does what would happen to a person who had been condemned to die of hunger, should any one give him from time to time a little nourishment, under pretext of strengthening him; one would prolong his torture and hinder him from dying. It is the same with the death of the senses, the powers, the "*own*" intellect, and the "*own*" will; because if one does not tear from them all subsistence, however small it be, one maintains them to the end in a dying life, which is very

well named mortification—what St. Paul has perfectly well distinguished when he says, "We bear in our body the mortifications of Jesus Christ;" that is, properly, the dying state. But afterwards, to make us see we must not end there, he adds elsewhere, "We are dead, and our life is hid with Jesus Christ in God." We never can lose ourselves in God, save by total death.

He who is dead in this way has no longer need of mortification, but all that is over for him—everything is become new. There is a great fault which persons of good intention commit; after they have attained the extinction of their senses by this continual and unrelaxing death, to remain all their life attached to that, and not to leave this work through a perfect indifference, taking alike the good and the bad, the sweet and the bitter, in order to enter upon a more useful toil, which is the mortification of the "*own*" intellect and the "*own*" will, commencing by the loss of their "*own*" activities. This is never effected without profound prayer, no more than the death of the senses will ever be entire without profound concentration joined to mortification. Because otherwise the soul, remaining still turned towards the senses, maintains them in a strong life, whereas by concentration she dwells as it were separated from them, and in this way indirectly contributes more to their death than all the rest.

The more you increased my love and my patience, O my God, the stronger and more continual became my crosses: but love made them light to me. Oh, poor souls who consume yourselves with superfluous worries, if you sought God in yourselves, you would soon find an end of your ills, since their excess would constitute your delight. Love, at this commencement, insatiable of mortifications and penances, made me invent all kinds. But what was admirable is that, without my paying any attention to it, as soon as mortification no longer produced any effect upon me, love made me discontinue it, to practise another

to which it directed me itself; for that love was so subtle and enlightened, it saw even the smallest defects. If I was about to speak, it made me see a fault therein, and made me keep silence. If I kept silence, it found a defect there. In all my actions it found defects—my manner of acting, my mortifications, my penances, my alms, my solitude, in short, it found defect in all. If I walked, I noticed a defect in my manner of walking. If I said anything to my advantage—"pride." If I said, "Well, I will say nothing of myself, good or bad"—"self-hood." If I was too concentrated and reserved—"self-love." If I was gay and open, people condemned me. This pure Love always found something to censure, and was extremely careful to let nothing pass with my soul. It is not that I paid attention to myself, for I could regard myself very little, owing to the fact that my attention to him through the adherence of the will was continual. I was unceasingly awake to him, and he kept his eye continually on me, and conducted me in such a way by the hand of his providence, that he made me forget everything, and, although I experienced these things, I was unable to declare them to any one. He so completely took away all regard towards myself, that I could not in any way make an examination. As soon as I set myself to do so, I was removed from all thought of myself, and turned to my one Object, who had no distinct object for me, but an utter generality and vastness. I was, as it were, plunged in a river of peace. I knew by faith it was God who thus possessed all my soul, but I did not think on it, as a wife seated near her husband knows it is he who embraces her, without saying to herself, "It is he," and without occupying her thought with it.

It was great trouble when I went to confession, for as soon as I thought to turn in upon myself for examination, Love seized me with such force, unction, and concentration, that I could no longer regard myself, nor

think of myself, but I was quite absorbed in a love as powerful as it was sweet. I had, therefore, to present myself in this state at the feet of the priest. It was then, O my God, you made present to me all that you wished me to say. Had I said it, I could no more open my mouth to pronounce a word, in such dependence did Love keep me; but this was done with so much unction and sweetness, that I could only adhere to him. I hardly heard anything of what the priest said to me, but when he pronounced the absolution, I experienced like a flowing in of grace and a more powerful unction. I remained there so full of love that I could not even think of my sins, to be sorry for them. I would not have wished for anything in the world to displease my dear Spouse, since before he had wounded me in this way I wept so bitterly, at the smallest faults; but it was not in my power, to give myself any other disposition than that he had placed me in. When I say, "I could not," it must not be thought God does violence to our liberty; oh, by no means! But he demands it from us with so many attractions, and causes us to do things with so much power, love, and sweetness, that he inclines our heart where he pleases, and that heart follows him very freely, and with so much pleasure and sweetness, that it would be unable not to do it. The attraction is as free as infallible.

Although Love treated me in this way, it must not be supposed he left my faults unpunished. O God, with what rigour do you punish your most faithful and most cherished lovers! I do not speak here of external penances, which are too weak to punish the least fault in a soul that God wills to purify radically, and which, on the contrary, serve rather as consolation and refreshment; but the manner God uses to punish the least faults in the chosen souls is so terrible, it must be experienced to be understood. All that I could tell of it would be understood only by experienced souls. It is an interior conflagration and a

secret fire, which, emanating from God himself, comes to purify the fault, and does not cease to cause an extreme pain until the fault is entirely purified. It is like a bone dislocated, which continues to cause extreme pain until it is entirely replaced. This pain is so painful to the soul, that she throws herself into a hundred postures to satisfy God for her fault. She would tear herself in pieces rather than suffer such a torment. Oftentimes she goes quickly to confession, to get rid of this great torment, and thus multiplies her confessions without matter, and withdraws herself from the designs of God.

It is, at that time, of great importance to know how to make use of this pain, and on this depends almost the whole advancement or retardation of souls. We must, then, in this painful, obscure, and troubled time, second the designs of God, and suffer this devouring and crucifying pain in all its extent as long as it shall endure, without adding anything to it or diminishing, bearing it passively, without desiring to satisfy God by penances or confession, until this pain be past. To bear it passively is more painful, and that which it is hardest to adjust one's self to, and it would not be believed that an inconceivable courage is needed. Those who have not experienced it will hardly believe me, yet nothing is more true, and I have heard tell of a very great soul (which, however, never attained entirely to God in this life, for want of courage to allow himself to be entirely purified by the devouring fire of justice), that he had never been able to bear this pain more than half an hour without going to free himself of it by confession. You instructed me, O my God, in another way, and you taught me that I must not practise penance nor confession, until you yourself were satisfied. O amiable cruel One! Pitiless and sweet Exactor, you made me bear this pain, not only many hours, but many days, according to the nature of my fault. A useless attention, a hasty word, was punished with rigour,

and I saw very well that if I had then put a hand to the work under pretext of supporting the ark, I should have been punished like Oza. I had, then, to suffer without stirring the least in the world. I have had much trouble to let God perform this operation in all its extent.

I understand, at the moment that I write, that this fire of exact justice is the same as that of purgatory; for it is not a material fire which there burns souls, as some persuade themselves, saying that God for that purpose enhances its activity and natural capacity. It is this exacting divine justice which burns in this way those poor souls, in order, by purifying, to make them fit to enjoy God. All other fire would be refreshment for them. This fire is so penetrating, it goes even into the substance of the soul, and can alone purify her radically; and as these souls are disengaged from their bodies, nothing causes a diversion of the pain, and this fire devours and penetrates them in a terrible manner, each according to the different degree of their impurity; it is the impurity which causes the vehemence of this fire of justice and its duration. Those who pretend that souls desire to get out of that fire do not know their situation. They remain in peace quite passive in their sufferings, without wishing to shorten them; for they are so powerfully absorbed in God, that, though they suffer extremely, they cannot return upon themselves to contemplate their sufferings, this return being an imperfection of which they are incapable. God applies to them according to his will the prayers that are made for them, and he grants to his saints and to his Church to shorten their torments and diminish the activity of that fire. O God, how very true it is, you are a "devouring fire"!

It was, then, in this purgatory, amorous yet at the same time rigorous, that you purified me from all that was in me contrary to your divine will, and I let you do it, although I sometimes suffered for several days pains that I cannot tell. I would have much wished that I had been

permitted to practise some extraordinary penances, but I had to continue practising only the daily ones, such as love made me practise. This pain ordinarily deprived me of the power of eating. I, however, did violence to myself to let nothing appear, except that there was remarked upon my face a continual occupation by God; for, as the attraction was powerful, it spread itself even over the senses, so that this gave me such a gentleness, modesty, and majesty that people of the world perceived it.

CHAPTER XII.

In whatever way my mother-in-law and my husband treated me, I answered only by my silence, which was not then difficult for me, because the great interior occupation and what I felt rendered me insensible to everything else. However, there were moments when you left me to myself, and then I could not keep back my tears, when that which they said to me was extra-violent. I rendered my mother-in-law and my husband the lowest services, in order to humiliate myself; anticipating those who were accustomed to do so at such hours. All this did not win them. As soon as they got vexed, either of them, although I was not aware of having given them any cause, nevertheless I asked their pardon, and even of that maid whom I have mentioned. I had much trouble to conquer myself on this point, because she thereby became more insolent, and thought herself justified as I humbled myself, reproaching me with things which should have made her blush and die of confusion. As she saw I no longer resisted her, and that, to conquer my temper (which sought to break out on all occasions, especially when I saw I was right and the others not), I gave way to her at once, and contradicted her in nothing, she took the opportunity to ill-treat me worse, and if I asked her pardon for offences she had committed against me, she got up, saying she well knew she was right. Her arrogance became so great that I would not

have treated a footman, even the lowest, as she treated me. One day, as she was dressing me, and pulled me very rudely, and spoke insolently to me, I said to her, "It is not for my sake I wish to answer you, for God knows I am not troubled at what you do to me; but it is that you might behave so before persons who might be scandalized at it. Moreover, being your mistress, God is assuredly offended at what you do to me." She quitted me on the moment, and went to my husband like one out of her mind, saying she wished to leave; that I had ill-treated her; that I hated her only because she took care of my husband in his attacks, which were continual; and that I did not wish her to render service to him. As my husband was very hasty, he at once took fire at her words. I finished dressing myself alone, since she had left me, and I dared not call another maid, for she would not allow any one but herself to come near me. I suddenly saw my husband come to me like a lion. Up to this time, whatever outbursts he had had against me, they had not been so violent. I thought he was going to beat me. I awaited the blow with calmness. As he could not walk without a stick, he lifted against me the one he held. I thought he was going to kill me, and, keeping myself united to God, I saw this without trouble. He did not, however, strike me; for he had sufficient presence of mind to see this was unworthy of him, but he threw the stick at me with force. It fell in front of me without touching me. He then poured out abuse as if I had been a porter or the most infamous of creatures. I maintained a profound silence, keeping myself concentrated in God, in order to suffer all these things for his love. I did not know whence could arise such a rage, nor what he wanted of me. The maid who had caused this tragedy entered. When my husband saw her, his anger redoubled. I did not say the least thing, keeping close to my God, like a victim ready for all he might will or permit. Then, redoubling his fury, he made me understand that he wished

me to ask her pardon, since I had offended her. Yet I had not done anything to this maid. I did it, and that quieted him. I went at once away to my beloved closet, and I was no sooner there than my divine Director made me leave it to go and look for this girl, and make her a present to reward her for the cross she had procured me. She was a little astonished, but her heart was too hard to let herself be won. I often acted in this way, when she caused me the greatest trouble, which was very often and almost continually. As she had singular address with sick persons, and my husband was so always, and she was the only one who could touch him when he had the gout, he valued her. Moreover, she was so deceitful, that before him she affected an extraordinary respect for me; but when I was not with him, if I said a word to her, although with great gentleness, and she heard him coming, she cried with all her might that she was very unfortunate, and put on an afflicted air, so that, without informing himself of the truth, he got into a rage against me; and my mother-in-law did the same.

The violence that I practised on my natural character, which was hasty and proud, was so great, that it was all I could bear. It sometimes seemed that my entrails were being torn, and I often fell ill from it. When any one came into my room, specially a man, I had given her an order to remain there. She sometimes spoke louder than I, in order to annoy me, and this made my friends hate her. If any unusual visitors came to see me, she hurled a thousand reproaches at me in their presence. If I held my tongue, she was still more offended, saying I despised her. My gentleness embittered her, and she made complaints of me to everybody. She defamed me, but my reputation was so well established in the mind of everybody, and in the country, as well owing to my external modesty and my devotion, as the great charities I bestowed, that nothing could then hurt me. Sometimes she ran

into the street, crying, "Am I not indeed unfortunate to have such a mistress?" People crowded round her to know what I had done to her, and, being without an answer, she used to say I had not spoken to her for the whole day. They used to go away with a laugh, saying, "She has not, then, done you much harm!" I am surprised at the blindness of confessors, and the little truth there is in the accusations their penitents make to them of themselves, unless God puts them into his truth; for the confessor of this maid passed her off for a saint, and that, because being of the lower class, she assisted at his conference. He made her often communicate, yet she had all those faults and others I suppress, since they are nothing to my subject. That confessor told me also she was a saint, and I made no answer, for Love would not have me speak of my troubles, but that I should consecrate all to him by a profound silence.

My husband was vexed at my devotion, and it was insupportable to him. He said that loving you, O my God, so strongly, I could no more love him; for he did not understand the true conjugal love is that which you yourself form in the heart that loves you. It is true, O God, pure and holy, that you impressed on me from the commencement such a love for chastity that there was nothing in the world I would not have done to have it. I preached nothing else to him, although I endeavoured not to make myself disagreeable, and to gratify him in all he could require of me. You gave me then, O my God, a gift of chastity, so that I had not even an evil thought, and marriage was very burdensome to me. He sometimes said to me, "One clearly sees you never lose the presence of God."

The world, which saw I had quitted it, tormented me and turned me into ridicule. I was its topic and the subject of its fables. It could not consent to a woman of hardly twenty years making so vigorous a war upon

it. My mother-in-law took the side of the world, and blamed me because I did not do certain things that, at heart, she would have been very vexed had I done. My domestic crosses greatly increased, for the attraction I felt was so great I knew not what to do. When I went upstairs, I could not come down again; was I below, I could not go up. I concealed myself to withdraw from the sight of men, who could by no means understand the operations that took place in my soul. I was as if distracted, for I lived in such separation from all created things, that it seemed to me there were no longer creatures on the earth. My eyes closed in spite of me, and I remained as if without motion, because Love kept me shut up within, as in a strong place, without my being able (whatever pains I took) to distract myself from his presence. I was your captive, O my Divine Love, and you were my gaoler. I breathed and lived only through you and for you. I seemed to experience literally those words of St. Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Jesus Christ lives in me." You were, O my God and my Love, the soul of my soul, and the life of my life. Your operations were so powerful, so sweet, and so concealed at the same time, that I could not explain them to myself. I felt myself burning within, with a continual fire, but a fire so peaceful, so tranquil, so divine, that it is inexplicable. This fire consumed gradually my imperfections, and that which was displeasing to my God. It seems to me it consumed, at the same time, all partitions, and placed me in a union of enjoyment which calmed all desires in me. I found in myself no desire except a secret inclination and a more intimate union.

We went into the country for some business. I concealed myself in a corner of a dry river-bed. Who could tell what you then did in my soul, O my God? You alone, who did it, knew it. I got up at four o'clock to pray, and I was insatiable therein. I went very far to the Mass, and the church was so situated the carriage could not get up to it,

There was a mountain to descend and another to climb. All that cost me nothing. Such a desire I had to receive you, O my only Good! How eager were you on your part to give yourself to your petty creature, even to working visible miracles for the purpose! Those who saw me lead so different a life from worldly women, said that I was not prudent. When I wished to read, I was so taken with your love, O my God, that at the first word I found myself absorbed in you—the book fell from my hands. If I tried to force myself, I did not understand what I read, and my eyes closed of themselves. I could neither open them, nor open my mouth to speak. If people talked near me, I took in nothing of what was said. If I went into society, often I could not speak, I was so seized by the inner life; I always went with somebody, in order that it might not appear. It was attributed to stupidity, and sometimes they said, "But what is the meaning of this? People believe this lady has cleverness. None of it appears." When I forced myself to speak, I could not, and I knew not what I said. I took work in order to conceal, under occupation, the inner state. When I was alone, the work used to fall from my hands, and I could do nothing but allow myself to be consumed by love. I tried to persuade a connection of my husband's to use prayer. She thought me mad for depriving myself of all the diversions of the age, but our Lord has since opened her eyes to make her despise them. I would have liked to teach all the world to love God, and I thought it only depended on them to feel what I felt. God made use of this to gain him many souls.

That worthy Father of whom I have spoken, who served for my conversion, made me acquainted with the Mother Prioress of the Benedictines, Genevieve Granger, who was one of the greatest servants of God of her time. This great soul was very useful to me, as I shall tell in the sequel. My confessor, who before this time used to say to everybody I was a saint (although I was so full of

frailties, and so far from the state in which you, O my God, by your mercy alone had subsequently placed me)—my confessor, seeing I had confidence in the Father I have mentioned, and that I was following a route unknown to him, declared openly against me, and, as I did not leave him for that, he gave me much trouble and caused me many crosses. The monks of his order persecuted me severely, because the monk who directed me belonged to a different order. They publicly preached of me as of a person deceived. It is this order which has caused me so many crosses, and stirred up so much persecution, as you shall see in the remainder of this narrative you exact from my obedience.

My husband and my mother-in-law, who, up to this, cared very little for this confessor, joined themselves with him, and wished me to give up prayer and the exercises of piety; but how, O my God, could I have given up prayer, of which I was not the mistress, and that you rather effected in me than I myself practised, and which it would have been impossible for me to hinder, as the more external circumstances occurred to distract me, the more powerfully did you besiege me within? When I was in society, you possessed me more powerfully. There took place in my heart a conversation very different from that which was going on outside. I could not hinder the presence of so great a Master appearing on my countenance. It was this which annoyed my husband, as he sometimes told me. I did what I could to prevent it appearing, but I could not succeed. I was so occupied within, that I knew not what I ate. I made a pretence of eating certain food that I did not take, and I did things so cleverly, it was not perceived. I had almost always absinthe and colocynth in my mouth. I learned to eat what I most hated. Love did not let me see anything or hear anything. Almost every day I took a scourging, and I often wore the iron girdle without its lessening the freshness of my face.

I had often serious illness. I had no consolation in life except in praying and in seeing the Mother of the Benedictines; but how dear those two consolations have cost me, especially the former, since it has been the source of all my crosses! But what am I saying, O my Love, estimating the cross as I do? Ought I not to say you have recompensed prayer by the cross, and the cross by prayer? O gifts inseparable in my heart! Since you have been given me, I have never been a moment without cross, nor, methinks, without prayer, although the loss I thought afterwards I had suffered of prayer has augmented my crosses to excess. However, when your eternal light arose in my soul, O Love, I have known the contrary, and that she had never been without prayer, as she had never been without cross.

My confessor at first laboured to prevent me from praying and seeing Mother Granger, and, as he had an understanding with my mother-in-law and my husband, the means they used was to watch me from morning to evening. I dared not leave the room of my mother-in-law or the bed of my husband. Sometimes I carried my work to the window, under pretence of seeing better, in order to console myself a little by some moments of quiet; but they came to watch me, to see if I was not praying instead of working. When my mother-in-law and husband were playing cards together, I kept myself turned towards the fire. They used to turn round to see if I was working or if I shut my eyes, and, if they perceived I shut them, they were in a temper for several hours. What was most strange is that when my husband went out, and that he had some days of health, he was not willing I should take the time of his absence for praying. He remarked my work, sometimes returned, and, if he knew I was in my closet, got into a temper. I used to say to him, "But, Sir, when you are absent, what matters it to you what I do, so long as I am attentive to you when you are present?" This did not

content him. He wished that in his absence I should not pray either. I do not think there is any torment equal to that of being strongly attracted, and unable to be alone. O my God, the contest they kept up with me, to hinder me from loving you, increased my love, and you yourself carried me away in an ineffable silence, when they hindered me from speaking to you. You united me so much the more powerfully to you, the more they tried to separate me.

I often played picquet with my husband, to please him, and I was then inwardly more attracted than if I had been in church. I could hardly contain the fire that devoured me, and if it had been less peaceable, I would have been unable to support it. It had all the warmth of love, but nothing of its impetuosity. The more ardent it was, the more peaceable it was. I could tell nothing of my prayer, owing to its simplicity. All I could tell of it is that it was continual as my love, and nothing interrupted it. On the contrary, the fire kindled itself with all that was done to extinguish it, and prayer nourished itself and increased from the fact that they deprived me of the time for using it. I loved without motive or reason for loving, for nothing passed through my head, but much in the inmost of myself. If I were asked why I loved God, whether it was owing to his mercy or his goodness, I knew not what was said to me. I knew that he was good, full of mercy. His perfections caused my pleasure, but I had no thought of myself for loving him. I loved him, and I burned with his fire because I loved him, and I loved him in such a way that I could love only him, but in loving him I had no motive save himself. All that was called interest, recompense, was painful to my heart. O my God, why cannot I make men comprehend the love with which you have possessed me from the commencement; and how remote it was from all interest! I thought neither of recompense, gift, nor favour, nor anything which concerned the lover; but the Beloved was the sole object that

drew the heart in his complete totality. That love could not contemplate any perfection in detail. It was not drawn to contemplate its love, but it was as if swallowed up and absorbed in this love. All that they told it of way, of degree, of contemplation, of attributes, it ignored all that; it knew only to love and to suffer; all the rest was outside its province—it did not even comprehend it. O ignorance, more learned than all the learning of the doctors! since you taught me so well a Jesus Christ crucified, that I madly loved the cross, and that all that did not bear the character of cross and suffering failed to please me!

At the beginning, I was attracted with such force, that it seemed my head would come off to unite with my heart, and I found that insensibly my body bent itself without my being able to prevent it. I did not understand the cause, but I have since understood, that as everything passed into the Will which is the sovereign of the powers, it drew them after it and reunited them in God, their divine centre and sovereign good, and as at the commencement these powers were not accustomed to be united, there was needed more violence to effect this reunion. For this reason it was more perceived. In the end, the coherence is so strong, it becomes quite natural. At that time, it was so strong that I would have wished to die, in order to be united inseparably and immediately to him, who attracted me with so much force. As everything passed into the Will, and my imagination, even the mind and intelligence, were absorbed in this union of enjoyment, I knew not what to say, having never read or heard anything of what I felt. I feared to lose my mind, for I must observe I knew nothing of the operation of God in souls. I had only read the "Philothea," the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," with Holy Scripture. But as to spiritual books on the inner life, I knew not what it meant. I had only read the "Spiritual Combat," which says nothing of these things.

I said to you, O my God, if you made the most sensual people feel what I feel, they would soon give up their false pleasures to enjoy so true a blessing.

Then all pleasures, the most valued, appeared to me so tasteless, that I could not understand how I had been able to amuse myself with them; so that since this time I have never been able to find any save with God, although I have been faithless enough to use all my efforts to find it elsewhere. I was not at all surprised that the martyrs gave their life for Jesus Christ. I deemed them so happy, I envied their good fortune, and it was martyrdom for me that I could not suffer martyrdom. For it is not possible to love the cross more than I loved it since then; at least, so it appeared to me, and my greatest suffering would have been to have had no suffering.

The esteem and love of crosses have continually increased; although afterwards I lost the sensible or perceived taste for the cross, I have never lost the esteem and love of the cross, any more than the cross has never left me. It has always been my faithful companion, changing and increasing according as my interior dispositions changed and increased. O good cross, delight of my heart, thou art that which has never left me since I gave myself up to my divine Master! I hope that thou wilt never abandon me. I declare I am in love with thee. I have lost inclination and appetite for all the rest; but as for thee, I perceive that the more profusely thou givest thyself to me, the more does my heart desire thee and love thee. I was then so greedy for the cross that I adopted every means to make myself feel affliction. But although I caused myself genuine pains, they appeared to me so trifling that it only served to reawaken my appetite for suffering, and to make me see that God alone can produce crosses suitable for satiating souls that are hungering for them. The more I used prayer in the way I have said, the more the love of the cross increased, and at the same

time the reality of the cross, for they came pouring upon me from all quarters. The characteristic of this prayer is further to give a great faith. Mine was without bounds, as well as my confidence and abandonment to God, love of his will and of the orders of his providence over me. I was previously very timorous: afterwards I no longer feared anything. It is then one feels the effects of those words of the Gospel, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

CHAPTER XIII.

From that time I was given an instinct of sacrifice and continual immolation; not in words, but by a silence that expressed all, and which had its real effect. I used to say to God, "O my Love, what could you desire of me to which I would not immolate myself willingly? Oh, do not spare me!" Then, conceiving in my mind what there was most frightful both in the cross and in humiliation, I immolated myself without reluctance. And as these immolations were accompanied by continual occasions of suffering, I may say, it seemed our Lord accepted all my sacrifices, and furnished me incessantly with new materials for making them to him. I used to say to him, "You are for me a husband of blood." I could not hear speak of God or our Lord Jesus Christ, without being beside myself. What surprised me most is, I had extreme difficulty to say my usual vocal prayers. As soon as I opened my mouth to pronounce them, love seized me so strongly that I continued absorbed in a profound silence and in a peace beyond expression. I made new efforts, and I passed my life in commencing my prayers without being able to finish them. As I never had heard tell of this state, I knew not what to do; but the powerlessness became still greater, because love became stronger, more violent, and more absorbing. It made in me, without the sound of words, a continual prayer, which seemed to me to be

that of our Lord Jesus Christ himself—prayer of the Word, which is effected by the Spirit, who, according to St. Paul, asks for us what is good, what is perfect, what is conformable to the will of God. I could not ask anything for myself or for another, nor wish anything but this divine will. I was consoled to find in St. Francis de Sales that when one would pray vocally, and that one feels one's self drawn to something else, we should follow this attraction; for I could not explain in any way what I experienced.

I sometimes went to see Mother Granger, and she helped me; but my confessor and my husband forbade me to go. I dared not even write to her, and, if I had written, she could not have answered me, owing to the weakness of her sight, so that I did not get much help from her When they knew I had been to her, there were never-ending quarrels. Yet I condemned myself to rigorous silence. My consolation was to communicate as often as I could; but, when this was known, which often enough happened, it cost me genuine crosses. My diversion was to go and see some poor sick people, and to dress the wounds of those who came to the house. That was the only consolation I had. I was like those drunkards or those lovers who think only of their passion.

I was some time in this way, after which prayer became more painful to me. When I was not engaged in it, I burned to be so. When I was in it, I could not continue so. I did violence to myself in order to remain more in prayer when painful than when consolatory. I sometimes suffered inexplicable torments. To relieve myself and cause diversion, I covered all my body with nettles, but, although this gave much pain, what I suffered within was such that I hardly felt the pain of the nettles. As the pain and the dryness still increased, and I no longer found that gentle vigour which made me practise good with pleasure, my passions, which were not dead, were not slow in waking

up again, and in giving me new exercise. It seemed to me I was like those young wives, who have trouble to get rid of the love of themselves, and to follow their friend into the battle. I fell back into a vain complaisance for myself. This inclination, which appeared to me dead when I was so smitten with my Love, revived, and it made me groan and pray God incessantly to take away from me this obstacle, and make me become ugly. I would have wished to be deaf, blind, and mute, in order that nothing might be able to divert me from my Love.

I went on a journey, where I shone more than ever, like those lamps which blaze up afresh when they are on the point of going out. Alas! how many snares were spread for me! I met them at every step. I committed infidelities; but, O my God, with what rigour did you punish them! The least look stirred you to anger against me, and your anger was more insupportable to me than death. Those unforeseen faults, where I let myself slip through weakness, and as it were in spite of myself, how many tears did they cost me! O my Love, you know the rigour you exercised on me, after my weaknesses, was not their cause. My God, with what pleasure would I have suffered all your rigours to escape being unfaithful to you! and to what severe chastisement did I not condemn myself! You know, O my God, you treated me sometimes like a father who pities the weakness of his child, and caresses it after its little slips. How many times did you make me feel that you loved me, although I had stains that appeared to me almost voluntary! It was the sweetness of this Love after my falls that made my truest torment. The more amiable and good towards me you appeared, the more inconsolable was I at turning aside from you, though it should be but for moments, and when I had inadvertently done anything, I found you ready to receive me, and I said to you, "O my God, is it possible you should be thus my *pis-aller?* What! I wander from you through vain complaisance

and in order to dwell upon frivolous objects, and I no sooner return to you, than I find you waiting for this return with outstretched arms to receive me!"

O sinner, sinner, couldst thou complain of thy God? Ah! if thou still retainest any justice, admit that thou wanderest from him voluntarily; that thou quittest him in spite of him; that if thou returnest, he is ready to receive thee; that if thou returnest not, he engages thee by all that is most powerful and most tender to do so. Thou art deaf to his voice. Thou dost not wish to hear it. Thou sayest he does not speak to thee, though he cries with all his strength; because thou makest thyself each day more deaf, in order not to hear his amiable words and his charming voice. O my Love, you did not cease to speak to my heart, and to succour it at need!

When I was at Paris, and the confessors saw me so young, they were astonished. After I had confessed, they said to me that I could not sufficiently thank God for the graces he had bestowed on me; that if I knew them, I would be astonished; and that if I was not faithful, I would be the most ungrateful of all creatures. Some declared they did not know a woman whom God kept so close and in so great purity of conscience. What made it such was that continual care you had over me, O my God, making me experience your intimate presence, as you have promised us in your Gospel, "If any one does my will, we will come unto him, and make our dwelling in him." This continual experience of your presence in me was what guarded me. I experienced what your prophet said, "It is in vain one watches to guard the city, if the Lord does not guard it." You were, O my Love, that faithful Guardian, who continually defended it against all sorts of enemies, preventing the smallest faults, or correcting them, when vivacity had led me to commit them. But, alas! my dear Love, when you ceased yourself to watch, how weak was I! and how my enemies prevailed over me! Let others attribute

their victories to their fidelity; for me I will only attribute them to your paternal care. I have too well proved my weakness, and I have made too fatal an experience of what I should be without you, to presume anything on my care. It is to you I owe everything, O my Deliverer, and I have infinite pleasure in owing it to you.

While at Paris I relaxed my exercises, owing to the little time I had, and, besides, trouble and dryness had seized upon my heart. The hand that sustained me was hidden, and my Beloved had withdrawn himself. I committed many infidelities, for I knew the violent passion certain persons had for me, and I suffered them to show it; I was not, however, alone. I also committed faults in leaving my neck a little uncovered, although it was not nearly so much so as others had it. I wept because I saw I was growing slack, and it was a very great torment for me. I sought everywhere for him who was consuming my soul in secret. I asked news of him, but, alas! he was hardly known to any one. I said to him, "O Beloved of my soul, if you had been with me, these disasters would not have happened to me! Alas! 'show me where you feed your flock at midday, and where you rest yourself' in the full day of eternity, which is not like the day of time, subject to nights and to eclipses." When I say I said this to him, it is only to explain and to make myself understood; for, in truth, everything passed almost in silence, and I could not speak. My heart had a language which went on without the sound of speech, and it was understood by its Beloved, as he understands the profound silence of the Word, ever eloquent, who speaks incessantly in the depths of the soul. O language that experience alone can make conceivable! Let no one fancy it was a barren language, an effect of the imagination. Far other is the mute language of the Word in the soul; as he never ceases to speak, so he never ceases to operate. "He spoke, and they were made." He operates

in the soul that which he speaks there. Neither let any one think that this language of the Word is carried on in distinct speech. It would be a mistake. This must be here explained.

There are two kinds of speech—mediate speech, which is effected either by some angel, or which forms itself in the mind; and this speech, which sounds and is articulate, is mediate speech. But there is a substantial speech, expressive speech, which operates infinitely more than can be conceived—speech which never ceases, and which produces its effect, not in distinction, as a thing of the moment, but in reality of operation, which remains fixed and immovable; speech which is understood by him in whom it is spoken only by its effects: "He spoke, and they were made;" "He commanded, and they were created." This ineffable speech communicates to the soul in which it is the facility of speaking without words. The speaking of the Word in the soul, the speaking of the soul through the Word, the speaking of the Blessed Ones in heaven,—oh, how happy the soul to whom this ineffable speaking is communicated!—a speaking which is understood by souls of the same kind, so that they mutually express themselves without speaking, and this expression causes an unction of grace, peace, and sweetness, and carries with it effects which experience alone can make conceivable. Oh, if souls were sufficiently pure to learn to speak in this way, they would participate beforehand in the language of glory. It was this divine speech of the Word that made itself felt by St. John, and which operated and expressed itself in him, as the Holy Virgin approached St. Elizabeth. Those two holy mothers, while approaching and uniting, procure for their offspring this divine communication, the Holy Virgin giving the opportunity to the little Jesus to communicate himself to St. John, and St. Elizabeth giving opportunity to St. John as she approached the Mother of God, to receive that

communication of the Word of which she was full. Oh, admirable mystery, that the Word alone can operate, and that no creature should presume to procure for himself! for his silence being effected only by his effort, it will not have the effect of grace, as that of which I speak, since it will not have the same principle. Oh, if one knew the operation of God in souls that abandon themselves to his control, and which consent to let him act, one would be charmed by it!

To return to my subject, from which I have wandered, through yielding to the impetuosity of the spirit which makes me write (which may sometimes happen to me, and therefore, Sir, I beg you to excuse the want of continuity in this narrative, you have desired from me, as I am not able to write in any other manner). I say, then, that when I saw I defiled myself through too much intercourse with creatures, I laboured to finish the business that kept me at Paris, in order to return to the country; for it seemed to me, O my God, you gave me sufficient strength to avoid the occasions, but when the occasion offered, I could not guarantee myself from complaisance and numerous other weaknesses. The pain I felt after my faults was so great I cannot explain myself. It was not a pain caused by a distinct view, motives, or affections; but it was a devouring fire, which did not cease till the fault was purified. It was a banishment from my central-depth, whence I clearly felt the Spouse in anger rejected me. I could not have access to it; and, as I could not find repose elsewhere, I knew not what to do. I was like Noah's dove, that found no rest for its feet, which was constrained to return to the ark, but on finding the window closed, it only flew round about, unable to enter. Through an unfaithfulness which will render me for ever condemnable, I have sometimes wished, in spite of myself, to find means of satisfaction without, but I could not. This attempt served, O my God, to convince me of my folly,

and to make me understand the weakness of the pleasures that are called innocent. When I forced myself to taste them, I felt an extreme repugnance, which, joined to the reproach of my infidelity, made me suffer much, and changed for me diversions into punishments. I said, "O my God, it is not you; there is none but you who can give solid pleasures." Never has creature experienced more the bounties of God, in spite of my ingratitudes. You pursued me, O my God, incessantly, as if the conquest of my heart must have constituted your happiness. In my astonishment I used sometimes to say to myself, "It seems that God has no other care and no other business than to think of my soul."

One day, through infidelity as much as through complaisance, I went to take a turn at the promenade, more in order to have myself looked at through excessive vanity, than to enjoy the exercise. O my God, in what a way did you make me feel this fault! Some carriages separated to come to us; but far from punishing me by letting me enjoy the pleasure, you did it by preserving me, and pressing me so closely, that I could pay attention only to my fault, and the dissatisfaction you exhibited to me at it. Some people wished to give me an entertainment at St. Cloud, and had invited other ladies, and, though ordinarily I took no part in any of these pleasures, I allowed myself to go there through weakness, and also through vanity; but, O my God, how tinged with bitterness was this simple diversion, which the other ladies present, though discreet, enjoyed! I could not eat anything whatsoever; yet the feast was most magnificent. My disquietude appeared upon my countenance, though they were ignorant of the cause. What tears it cost me! and how rigorously you punished me for it! You separated yourself from me for more than three months, but in a manner so harsh, that there was no longer for me anything but an irritated God. I was on this occasion, and during another journey I made

with my husband in Touraine before my small-pox, like those animals destined for slaughter, that are decked out on certain days with flowers and greenery, and so marched through the town before being slaughtered. This weak vanity, then on its decline, cast out new fires, but it shone thus only to extinguish itself more promptly.

During all this time I endeavoured to stifle the martyrdom that I felt within, but it was useless. I lamented my weakness. I made verses to express my trouble, but they served only to augment it. It was such that it must be experienced to be understood. I prayed you, O my God, with tears, to take away this beauty, which had been so disastrous to me. I desired to lose it or to cease to love it. As you pressed me so closely, O my God, I could not resist. In spite of myself, I was obliged to leave everything, and to return in the greatest haste. Yet, notwithstanding my infidelities, you had, O my Love, a care for me that cannot be understood, as the instance I am about to tell will prove.

One day that I had resolved to go to Notre Dame on foot, I told the lackey in attendance to take me the shortest way. Providence allowed him to lead me astray. When I was on a bridge, there came to me a man very badly dressed. I thought he was a poor man, and was about to give him alms. He thanked me, and said he did not ask it, and drawing near me he commenced his conversation on the infinite greatness of God, of which he told me admirable things. He then spoke to me of the Holy Trinity, in a manner so grand and so exalted, that all I had ever heard said on it up to this time, appeared to me shadows compared to what he told me. Continuing, he spoke to me of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, of its excellence, of the care one should have in hearing it and assisting at it with respect. This man, who did not know me, and did not even see my face, for it was covered, said to me then, "I know, Madame, you love God, that you

are very charitable and give much alms," and many other things of the qualities God had given me, "but yet you are very much astray. God desires something else from you. You love your beauty." Then, giving me a simple but true picture of my defects, my heart could not deny what he said. I listened to him in silence and with respect, while those who followed me said I was conversing with a mad man. I well felt he was enlightened with the true wisdom. He told me, moreover, that God did not wish me to be content to work, like others, to secure my salvation by merely avoiding the pains of hell; but that he further wished me to arrive at such a perfection in this life, that I should avoid even those of purgatory. During this conversation the road, though long, appeared to me short. I did not notice it till my arrival at Notre Dame, where my extreme fatigue made me fall into a faint. What surprised me is that when I arrived at the double bridge, and looked on all sides, I no more perceived this man, and I have never seen him since. On hearing him speak in this way, I asked him who he was; he told me he had once been a porter, but he was so no longer. The thing did not then make upon me anything like the impression it has since done. I at first related it as a story, without telling what he had last said to me; but having conceived there was something divine in it, I spoke of it no more.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was after this, my husband, having had some relief from his continual illness, wished to go to Orleans, and thence into Touraine. On this journey, my vanity triumphed, to disappear for ever. I received many visits and much applause. My God, how clearly I see the folly of men, who let themselves be caught by a vain beauty! I hated passion, but, according to the external man, I could not hate that in me which called it into life, although according to the interior man, I ardently desired to be delivered from it. O my God, you know what this continued combat of nature and grace made me suffer. Nature was pleased at public approbation, and grace made it feared. I felt myself torn asunder, and as if separated from myself; for I very well felt the injury this universal esteem did me. What augmented it was the virtue they believed united with my youth and my appearance. O my God, they did not know that all the virtue was in you alone, and in your protection, and all the weakness in me. I went to confessors, to accuse myself of my unfaithfulness, and to complain of the revolts I endured; but they understood not my trouble. They esteemed, O God, what you condemned. They regarded as virtue what appeared to me detestable in your eyes, and what made me die of grief is that, far from measuring my faults by your graces, they regarded what I was in relation to what I might be; so that, far

from blaming me, they flattered my pride. They justified me from that of which I accused myself, and they hardly regarded, even as a trifling fault, what in me—whom you had foreguarded with very great mercy—was infinitely displeasing to you, O my God. We must not measure the gravity of faults by the nature of the sins, but by the state of the person who commits them. The least infidelity of a wife is more grievous to her husband than the great errors of his servants. I told them my trouble, because I had not my neck entirely covered, although I was much better than other women of my age. They assured me I was dressed very modestly, and that, as my husband wished it, there was no harm. My internal Director told me quite the contrary, but I had not the strength to follow him, and to dress myself, at my age, in a manner, that would appear extraordinary. Besides the vanity I had furnished me with pretexts which appeared to me the justest possible. Oh, if confessors knew the injury they cause women by these soft complaisances, and the evil it produces, they would show a great severity; for if I had found a single confessor who had told me there was harm in being as I was, I would not have continued in it a single moment; but my vanity taking the part of the confessors, and the maids who served me, made me think they were right and my troubles were fanciful.

On this journey we met with accidents and perils which would have frightened any other than me. But although I had fallen into the weaknesses I have mentioned, it was not in my power to fear dangers that appeared inevitable, and which frightened everybody. Without thinking of it, we got entangled in a place the river Loire had undermined, and the road which appeared sound from above was without support. We only perceived the danger when it was impossible to turn to the right or left, and it was necessary to keep on, or to be precipitated into the river. One side of the carriage rolled in the air, and was only

supported by the servants, who held the other side. Nothing could exceed the terror. As for me, I felt none of it, and I found myself so abandoned to God for all the events his providence might permit, that I felt even a distinct joy at perishing by a stroke of his hand. However, I had a certain secret confidence no accident would happen, and this proved true, although, after this, we met with another accident that appeared more vexatious. The Holy Virgin, for whom I always had a great devotion, delivered us from these dangers. I had a very strong faith she would not allow persons to perish who had undertaken this journey only to honour her in her church of Ardilliers; for my husband had set out on this journey with much fervour, and these devotions were to his taste.

There I went to confession to a man who caused me much trouble. He wanted to know the intention I had had in getting married: and as I answered him that I had had only that of obeying, he told me it was worthless, that I was not properly married—I must be remarried. He would have caused a breach between my husband and me, that we would never see each other again, if I had been credulous, and if God had not assisted me; for he condemned as mortal sin what was absolute duty, so that what with his proclaiming that all was mortal sin, he would have caused us much trouble if God had not assisted us. Under pretext of instructing me, he informed me of sins that up to then I had been ignorant of, and because in marrying my intention had not been to have children, but to obey, he gave me excessive penances. But a Father of the Company of Jesus, whom I went to see at Orleans on my return, released me from them, assuring me I had not committed even a venial sin, which much consoled me; for as that other had made mortal sins of all that to which my duty obliged me, he would have placed me under the necessity either of failing in my duty, or of doing things which he assured me were mortal sins. I further committed

faults on this journey in looking at what was curious when I was taken sight-seeing, although I had the idea of turning away my eyes; this, however, rarely happened. On my return I went to see Mother Granger, to whom I related all my frailties and my slips. She restored me, and encouraged me to resume my former course. She told me to cover up entirely my neck with a handkerchief, which I have ever since done, although I am the only person in this style. Yet you had, O my God, concealed your anger over a long series of infidelities; but you shut your eyes to them for a time only, to make me pay for them with extreme rigour. You acted towards me like husbands, vexed at the waste their young wives make of the treasures they had confided to them only to render them good economists. You determined to despoil me of all, that I might no longer abuse a good you had given me to glorify you therewith. A hundred times I had had a longing to take money and go off into some convent, believing it permissible, because I imagined it was impossible that in the world I could respond to God with the fidelity I owed him; for I felt clearly that opportunity was my ruin—without the opportunity I did well, but it no sooner presented itself than I experienced my weakness. I would have liked to find some cavern to bury myself alive in, and it seemed to me the most frightful prison would have been more sweet to me than so fatal a liberty. I was as if torn asunder, for on the outside my vanity dragged me, and within, the divine love; and as in this time of my infidelities I did not entirely turn to one side or the other, I endured a division which, while tearing me, made me suffer more than I can tell.

I prayed you, O my God, to take away the liberty I had of displeasing you, and I said to you, "Are you not strong enough to hinder this unjust division?" For as soon as I had the opportunity of exhibiting my vanity, I did it; and as soon as I had done it, I returned to you; and you, far

from rejecting me, received me often with open arms, and gave me new proofs of love. That was my bitterest pain, for although I had this miserable vanity, my love was such that, after my falls, I loved better your rigours than your caresses. Your interests were more dear to me than my own, and I could not suffer that you should not do justice to yourself. My heart was penetrated with love and grief, and what rendered it very keen was that I could not bear to displease you, O my God, after the graces I had received from you. That those who do not know you should offend you, I am not surprised; but that this heart, which loves you more than itself, and which has felt the strongest proofs of your love, should let itself be carried away by tendencies it detests, oh, it is that which makes its cruellest martyrdom; and a martyrdom so much the more afflicting, as it lasts the longer. O my God, I said to you, when I felt most powerfully your love and your presence, "What! do you throw yourself away on such an infamous creature, who pays you only with ingratitude?" For if one reads this life attentively, on the part of God there will be seen only goodness, mercy, and love; and on the part of this creature, faithlessness, nothingness, sin, and weakness. If there is anything good, it is yours, O my God; as for me, I have nothing to boast of but my weaknesses, since in the union of indissoluble marriage you have made with me, the only portion I have brought is weakness, nothingness, and sin. O Love, how I love my poverty! and how grateful is my heart. What joy it has, to owe all to you, and that towards it you make manifest the treasures and the infinite riches of your patience and your love! You have acted like a magnificent King, who, desiring to espouse a poor slave, forgets her slavery, and gives her all the ornaments he wishes her to have to please him. He pardons her even with pleasure all the faults her rudeness and bad education cause her to commit: that is your conduct towards me, O my God; therefore at present my poverty is my

riches, and I have found my strength in my extreme weakness.

I say, then, to return to my subject, that your caresses after my infidelities were much more difficult for me to bear than your repulses. Oh, if one knew the confusion in which they place the soul! It is not conceivable. That soul would wish with all her strength to satisfy the divine justice, and if one allowed her, she would tear herself to pieces. The martyrdom of suffering nothing is then the most cruel of all martyrdoms. O Love, sweet and painful at the same time, agreeable and cruel, how difficult thou art to bear! I made verses and hymns to express my plaint. I practised penances, but they were too light for so great a wound; they were like those drops of water which serve only to render the fire more fierce. One would wish to be consumed and punished. Oh, conduct of love to an ingrate! Oh, frightful ingratitude towards such goodness! A great part of my life is only a tissue of similar things, which ought to make me die of grief and love.

CHAPTER XV.

On returning home, I found my little daughter very ill, from her nurse having taken her out while in small-pox, and she was near dying. The gout again attacked my husband, besides his other ailments, and my eldest son took the small-pox so severely that it broke out three times, and at last rendered him as disfigured as he had been beautiful. I had to commence with this sacrifice, which was followed by many others. As soon as I saw small-pox in the house, I was certain I must take it. Mother Granger told me to go away if I could. My father wished to take me and my second son, whom I very tenderly loved, to his house, but my mother-in-law would not consent. She persuaded my husband it was useless. The doctor she sent for said the same thing, that I would take it as well at a distance as near at hand, if disposed to take it. I can say she was then a second Jephtha, and she innocently sacrificed us both. Had she foreseen what happened, I am sure she would have acted otherwise, but aged persons have often certain maxims, which they are unwilling to give up. All the town interested itself. Every one begged her to make me leave the house; that it was cruelty to expose me thus; but you, O my God, who had other designs for me, did not permit her to consent. Every one attacked me, thinking I was unwilling to leave; for I did not tell any one it was

owing to their unwillingness, and I had no other instinct then but to immolate myself to you, O my God, and to your divine providence. I made a sacrifice to you of that beauty, which without you would have been so fatal to me; and although I might have withdrawn, in spite of the resistance of my mother-in-law, had I wished it, I was not willing to do so without their consent, because it seemed to me this resistance was an order of heaven. O divine will of my God, in spite of all my worthlessness, you then constituted my life.

I continued, then, in this abandonment, and in this spirit of sacrifice to God, awaiting from moment to moment in entire resignation all that it might please him to ordain. I cannot tell what nature suffered, for I was like those persons who see their death certain, and the remedy easy, without being able to avail of it. I was not less troubled for my younger son than for myself. My mother-in-law had such excessive love for the one who was ill, she cared nothing for the others; yet I am sure, if she had believed the small-pox would have killed him, she would have been very far from acting as she did. It was a result of your providence, O my God, rather than of her temper. You make use of creatures and their natural inclination to bring things to pass according to your designs; therefore, though I see in creatures conduct which appears at once so unreasonable and crucifying, I ascend higher, and I regard them as the instruments of your justice, and at the same time of your mercy, O my God, for your justice is quite full of your mercy.

When I told my husband that I was sick and the small-pox was about to seize me, he said it was my imagination. I informed Mother Granger of the situation I was in, and, as she had a tender heart, she was troubled at this harshness, and encouraged me to immolate myself to our Lord. At last, nature, seeing that there was no escape, consented to the sacrifice the spirit had already made. On the day of

St. Francis D'Assisi, 4th October, 1670, when aged twenty-two years and some months, I found myself so ill at the Mass, that all I could do was to communicate. I was near fainting in the church. When at home, a great shivering seized me, together with a very severe headache and sickness. They would not believe I was ill, and our Lord permitted them to treat me thus harshly; yet in a few hours I was so ill I was at once judged in danger. I was seized with inflammation of the chest, and the remedies for one ailment were very unsuited to the other. The doctor, my mother-in-law's friend, was not in the town; nor was the ordinary surgeon. They sent to fetch a surgeon, a skilful man, who said I should be bled. My mother-in-law would not permit it. I remained utterly neglected, so that I was on the point of dying for want of help. My husband, not being able to see me, and relying entirely upon my mother-in-law, let her act. She had resolved that no doctor but her own should treat me, and yet she did not send to fetch him, though he was but a day's journey off. I believe she opposed the bleeding because she, perhaps, feared it might be hurtful to me. She was only wrong in not sending to fetch the doctor in whom she had confidence. It was you, O my God, who ordained this conduct for the good of my soul. I saw all those things, and the extremity in which I was, but you kept me in such a spirit of sacrifice, that I did not open my mouth to ask for help. I awaited life or death from your hand, without manifesting the least trouble at a course so extraordinary. The peace I possessed within, owing to the perfect resignation in which you kept me, O my God, through your grace, was so great, that it made me forgetful of myself in the midst of the most violent illness and the most pressing dangers. But if the resignation you gave me on this occasion was so perfect that I may call it uniformity, since I did not find in myself any repugnance to your will, and I was active in nothing, but bore with love in silence your

crucifying operation, without adding anything to what you operated in me and upon me—if, I say, my submission was entire, your protection was miraculous. How many times have you reduced me to extremity! but you have never failed to succour me when things appeared most desperate.

You brought it about that a skilful surgeon, who had attended me in that very dangerous illness I have mentioned, passing by the place of my residence, made inquiries about me. He was told I was extremely ill. He immediately got off his horse and came to see me. Never was man more surprised when he saw the frightful state I was in. The small-pox, which could not break out, had attacked my nose with such violence it was already quite black. He thought there was gangrene, and the nose was about to fall off. He was so shocked at it he could not conceal his surprise from me. My eyes were like two coals. The strange news did not alarm me. It was far short of what I sacrificed myself to at that moment, and I was very pleased that God should avenge himself of the infidelities this face had made me commit. This surgeon went down to the room of my mother-in-law, and told her that it was a scandalous thing to let me die in this way, for want of a blood-letting. She opposed herself violently to it; she told him she would not suffer it, and that nothing should be done for me until the doctor, her friend, returned from the country. He got so angry at their leaving me in this way, without sending to fetch the doctor, that he said some strong things even to my mother-in law. He immediately came up to my room, and said to me, "If you consent, I will save your life: I will bleed you." I at once stretched out my arm to him, and although the arm was extremely swollen, he instantly bled me. My mother-in-law was very angry. The small-pox at once broke out, and he ordered I should be bled in the evening; but they would not have it, and I dared not keep him, however great my need, through

fear of displeasing my mother-in-law, and from a total surrender into the hands of God.

I give all this in detail, in order to show how advantageous it is to abandon one's self to God without reserve; although he may leave us apparently some moment to prove and exercise our submission, he yet never fails us when the need is most pressing. One may say, with Scripture, that "it is he who conducts to the gates of death, and brings back from them." My nose became its natural size and lost its blackness, and the small-pox appeared in it at once after the bleeding, and, if they had continued to bleed me, I should have got on well; but as the surgeon went away, I fell back into the former state of neglect. All the disease settled on my eyes, which became so inflamed and painful it was thought I should lose them. I was three weeks with these severe pains, without sleeping a quarter of an hour during all that time. I could not close the eyes, because they were full of small-pox, nor open them owing to the pain. I quite expected to be blind, for there was every appearance of it. My neck, my palate, and my gums were so filled, that I could not swallow broth nor take any nourishment without suffering extremely. All my body was like that of a leper, and those who came to see me said they had never seen any one have it in greater quantity or more malignant; but as for my soul, she was in a contentment I cannot express. The hope of her liberty through the loss I endured, rendered her so satisfied and so united to God, that she would not have changed her condition for that of the happiest prince in the world.

Every one thought I should be inconsolable, and they endeavoured to sympathize in my grief. My confessor came to see me, although he was not satisfied with me. He asked me if I was not very grieved at having the small-pox. I answered him frankly, without much reflection, that if the confusion in which the disease kept me had not made me forget the Te Deum, I would have

said it in thankfulness to God. This worthy man was annoyed with me for my answer, deeming me proud. I made no reply, and I saw clearly I was wrong in speaking to him with so much freedom, because he did not understand my disposition. They watched all my words, and, when they heard me say I should be free, they took that as a complaint I made to you, O my God, of my external captivity, which they attributed to my husband's jealousy, although it was not so. I meant, O my God, a liberty you alone could give me, in removing that snare for my pride, as well as for the passion of men. Oh, if I could describe the ineffable pleasure I tasted at the spoliation you made of the thing which was then most sensible to me! My heart praised you for it in its profound silence and the pain I suffered redoubled my love. They never heard me complain of my ills, nor the loss I experienced. The tranquillity of my heart expressed itself outwardly by patience and silence. I kept silent alike as to what you made me suffer through yourself, O my God, and through the hand of creatures. All was welcome from your hand. The only word I said was to rejoice at the interior liberty I received thereby, and they made a crime of it. What I most felt was that my younger son took the small-pox the same day as I, and died of it for want of care. This blow was painful to my heart, which, however, drawing strength from my weakness, sacrificed him, and said to God, like Job, "You had given him to me; you have taken him from me; your holy name be praised." The spirit of sacrifice possessed me so strongly, that, although I loved him tenderly, I never shed a tear on learning his death. The day he was buried, the doctor sent to tell them not to put the tombstone on the grave, because my daughter could not live two days. My eldest son was not yet out of danger when this happened, so that I saw myself almost on the same day despoiled of all my children, my husband ill, and I still very ill. You were not willing, O my God,

to take my daughter at this time, and you prolonged her life for some years, only to render her loss more painful to me. My mother-in-law's doctor arrived at last, at a time when he was no longer any use for me. When he saw the strange inflammation of my eyes, he caused me to be bled several times, but the time for it was gone, and these bleedings, which would have been so necessary at the commencement, only served to weaken me. My state was such, it was with great difficulty they could bleed me, for the arm was so swollen they had to bury the lancet up to the handle. Moreover, bleeding at such an unsuitable time was near causing my death; but you were not willing, O my Lord, to withdraw me yet from the world, in order to make me suffer more. I declare that death would have been very agreeable to me, and I looked upon it as the greatest of all blessings; but I saw well there was nothing to hope for in this direction, and, in place of tasting this blessing, I had to endure life.

As soon as my eldest son was a little better, he got up to come into my room. I was surprised at the extraordinary change I saw in him. His face, which before was of extreme delicacy, had become like a ploughed field. This made me curious to see myself in a mirror. The change made me afraid of myself. It was then I saw that God had wished the sacrifice in all its reality. There were some circumstances which, owing to the perversity of my mother-in-law, caused me many crosses, and which finished spoiling my son. My heart was yet firm in my God, and strengthened itself by the greatness and multitude of the ills. It was like a victim immolated incessantly upon the altar of him who had first immolated himself for his love. I can say, O my God, that those words which have always been the delight of my heart, have had their effect in me all my life, "What shall I render unto the Lord for the benefits I have received from him? I will take the cup of salvation." You have, during my whole life, crowded

upon me blessings and crosses. My principal desire, with that of suffering for you, O my Love, has been to let myself be led at your pleasure, without resistance, whether for the interior or for the exterior; and those gifts, with which it has pleased you to favour me from the commencement, have constantly increased up to the present, since you have conducted me, according to your will, by routes impenetrable to any other than you; and you have provided for me, through your wisdom, continual crosses.

Pomades were sent to me to restore my complexion and fill up the hollows of the small-pox. I had seen wonderful effects from them with others. I at first wished to try their effect with me, but Love, jealous of his work, did not wish it. There was in my heart a voice which said, "If I had wished thee beautiful, I would have left thee as thou wert." I had to give up every remedy, and hand myself over a prey to the rigours of Love, who compelled me to go into the open air, which increased the pitting, and to expose myself to the eyes of everybody in the streets without concealment, when the redness from the smallpox was most marked, in order to make my humiliation triumph where my pride had triumphed. My husband was then almost constantly in bed. He made such good use of his illness, that I could not regret what God sent him, although it involved more captivity for me, and more crosses of all kinds. I was very pleased that God saved him by this way. As he no longer found in me the charms which softened his harshness and calmed his anger, he became more susceptible to the impressions that were made upon him against me. On the other hand, the persons who spoke to him to my disadvantage, seeing themselves better listened to, spoke more strongly and more often. There was only you, O my God, who did not change to me. You redoubled your interior graces in proportion as you increased my exterior crosses.

CHAPTER XVI.

That maid of whom I spoke became every day more arrogant, and as the Devil stirred her up to torment me, when she saw that her outcries did not annoy me, she thought if she could hinder me from communicating, she would cause me the greatest of all annoyance. She was quite right, O Divine Spouse of pure souls, since the only satisfaction of my life was to receive you and to honour you. I suffered a species of languor when I was some days without receiving you. When I was unable, I contented myself with keeping some hours near you, and, in order to have liberty for it, I applied myself to perpetual adoration. I procured, as far as I was able, that the churches should be well adorned. I gave the most beautiful things I had to make the ornaments. I contributed the most I could to provide silver ciboires and chalices. I founded a perpetual lamp, in order that its immortal flame should be a sign that I did not wish the fire of my love ever to become extinct. I said to you, O my Love, "Let me be your victim, consume me utterly, reduce me to ashes, and spare nothing to annihilate me." I felt an inclination that I cannot express, to be nothing. This maid then knew my affection for the Holy Sacrament, before which, when I could freely, I passed many hours on my knees. She took care to watch every day she thought I communicated. She came to tell my mother-in-law and my

husband, who wanted nothing more to get into a rage against me. There were reprimands which continued the whole day. If any word of justification escaped me, or any vexation at what they said to me, it was ground enough for their saying that I committed sacrilege, and crying out against devotion. If I answered nothing, that increased their bitterness. They said the most stinging things possible to me. If I fell ill, which happened often enough, they took the opportunity to come and wrangle with me in my bed, saying it was my communions and my prayers made me ill; as if to receive you, O true Source of all good, could cause any ill!

This maid told me one day, in her passion, that she was going to write to the person she thought to be my director, in order that he should hinder me from communicating, and that he did not know me. When she saw I did not answer her, she cried with all her might that I ill-treated her, and that I despised her. When I went out to go to the Mass, although I had previously given orders about household things, she went and told my husband I had gone out, and that I had not arranged anything. When I returned, I had to put up with much. They would not listen to any of my reasons, and declared them to be lies. On the other hand, my mother-in-law persuaded my sick husband that I let everything be destroyed, and that, if she did not take care of them, he would be ruined. He believed her, and I patiently bore everything, endeavouring to do my duty to my best. What was most painful to me was, not to know what measure to adopt; for when I ordered anything without her, she complained I had no consideration for her, that I did everything in my own way, and that things were very bad; then she ordered them differently. If I asked her what should be done, she said that she had to bear the burden of all.

I had hardly any rest but that I found, O my God, in love of your will, and in submission to its orders,

although they were full of rigour for me. My words and my actions were ceaselessly watched, in order to find ground for chiding me. As soon as there was the least ambiguity in them, they were converted into crimes. I was ridiculed the whole day, the same things being incessantly repeated, and that, in the presence of servants. What made me greatly suffer was, that for some time I had a weakness that I could not conquer, which God left me for my humiliation; this was weeping, so that it made me the talk of the house. With all my heart I willed all that was done to me, and yet I could not keep back my tears, which overwhelmed me with confusion, and doubled my crosses; for it increased their anger. How many times have I made my meal of my tears, which appeared the most criminal in the world! They said I should be damned; as if tears had dug hell! they would be more suited to extinguish it. If I repeated anything I had heard, they tried to make me responsible for the truth of those things. If I kept silence; it was through scorn and ill-temper. If I knew anything and did not tell; it was a crime. If I told it; I had invented it. Sometimes I was tormented several days in succession without being given any respite. The maids said I ought to play the invalid in order to be left in quiet. I answered nothing; for Love pressed me so closely that he would not I should relieve myself by a single word, nor even by a look.

Sometimes, in the extremity to which nature was reduced, I said, "Oh, if I had only some one I could look at, and who would listen to me, I should be relieved!" but this was not given me. If at times I happened to find relief in anything, God, for some days, removed the external cross, and it was for me the greatest of all troubles; its want was for me a chastisement more difficult to bear than the greatest crosses. The absence of the cross was for me so terrible a cross, that the desire for its return made me languish, and led me to

say, like St. Theresa, "Either to suffer or to die!" It was not slow in returning, this charming cross, and the strange thing was that, though I desired it so vehemently, when it returned, it appeared to me so heavy and burdensome, it was almost insupportable.

Although I extremely loved my father, and he also loved me very tenderly, I never spoke of my crosses to him. A relative, who loved me much, perceived the want of kindness with which I was treated. Even in his presence very hurtful things were said to me. He went, very indignant, to tell my father, adding that I made them no answer, and I would pass for a stupid. I afterwards went to see my father, and he reproved me, contrary to his usual practice, rather sharply, because I allowed them to treat me as they did, without saying anything—that every one ridiculed me for it; that it seemed I had not the spirit to answer. I replied to my father, that if people observed what my husband said to me, it was confusion enough for me, without bringing more upon myself by my answers; that if it was not remarked, I ought not to bring it into prominence, nor make everybody see the weak point of my husband; that by not saying a word, I stopped all dispute, whereas I should keep it up by my replies. My father, who was very good, told me I did well; that I should continue to act as God would inspire me. He never afterwards spoke to me of it.

What made me most suffer, was that they continually spoke to me against my father, for whom I had as much respect as tenderness, and against my relatives and those I thought highly of. I was much more pained by this than by all that was said against me. I could not keep myself from defending them, and in that I did ill; for what I said only served to embitter them more. If any one complained of my father or my relatives, he was always right, and those who previously to their mind were most unreasonable persons, were approved, as soon as they

spoke against my connections. When any one declared himself my friend, he was no longer welcome. I had a relation whom I much loved, because of her piety. When she came to see me, she was either openly told to go back again, or she was treated in such a way she was obliged to do it. That pained me extremely. If there was anything true or false against me, or against my relatives, it was used to reproach me with. When any person out of the common came, they spoke against me, to people who had never seen me, which greatly astonished them; but when they had seen me, they did nothing but pity me.

Whatever was said against me, Love would not that I should justify myself. If I did it, which was seldom, I was reproached for it. I did not speak to my husband of what my mother-in-law did to me, nor of what that maid did to me, except the first year, when I was not sufficiently touched by God to endure such treatment. You made me do, O my Love, still more than all that, for as my mother-in-law and my husband were very hasty, they oftentimes mutually fell out. It was then I was in favour with them. They, in turns, made their complaints to me. Never did I tell the one what the other had said to me, and although, speaking humanly, it would have been to my advantage to profit by the occasion, I never used it to complain. On the contrary, Love gave me no rest until I had reconciled them. I said so many kind things of the one to the other, that I reconciled them. Although I was not ignorant, from the frequent experience I had had of it, that their reunion would cost me dear, I nevertheless did it as quickly as was possible for me. Hardly were they reconciled, when they joined together against me.

The crosses would have appeared to me a trifling matter if, drawn to it as I felt myself, I had had freedom to pray and to be alone; but I was compelled to remain in their presence, under a subjection that was not conceivable.

My husband looked at his watch if I was more than half an hour at prayer, and, when I exceeded it, he was vexed. I said to him sometimes, "Give me an hour to divert myself; I will employ it as I please;" but he would not give it to me for praying, although he would have given it to me for diversion, had I wished. I confess my lack of experience has caused me much trouble, and that I have thereby often given occasion for their making me suffer; for, in short, was I not bound to see my captivity as an effect of your will, O my God, to be content with it, and to make of it my sole prayer; but I often fell back into the paltriness of wishing to take time for praying, which was not agreeable to my husband. It is true these faults were more frequent at the commencement; afterwards I prayed God at his bedside, and did not go out any more.

One of the things that has given me most trouble at the commencement of the way, is that I was so strongly occupied within that I forgot many things; this caused me many crosses, and gave ground to my husband for being vexed. For though I had an extreme love for all that was my duty, and that I preferred it even to everything else, I nevertheless, without wishing it, forgot a number of things, and as my husband did not like one to fail in anything, I gave him occasion for getting angry. I, however, forgot nothing that was of consequence; but I forgot almost all the small things. The great habit I had acquired of mortifying my eyes, together with concentration, made me pass certain things without remarking them, and my mother-in-law, who came after me, saw them, and justly got angry with me for my lack of care. However, I could not do better, for the more I wished to apply myself, the less I succeeded. I went into the garden, without remarking anything there, and when my husband, who could not go there, asked me news of it, I was unable to answer him, and he got vexed. I went there expressly to notice everything in order to tell him I had seen them, and

when I was there I forgot, and did not think of looking at them. One day, I went more than ten times to the garden, to see there something to report to my husband, and I forgot it. When I succeeded in remembering to look at things, I was very pleased, and it was usually the time when I was not asked for news. As I was also accustomed at the commencement, in order to mortify my curiosity, which was very great, to withdraw under some pretext, when some agreeable news was being told, and only to return when I could no longer understand what was said, I fell into an extreme, which was that I neither comprehended nor heard news that was told in my presence; so that, when my husband spoke of it to me, I was astonished and confused at not knowing what it was, or what to answer, and I thereby became a cause for his growing vexed, without being able to avoid it. I would have been very glad to do otherwise, for, far from mortifying myself at that time in this particular, I would have been glad to make myself attentive; but my attention was lost without my understanding how it was, and the more I was persuaded I ought to apply myself to please them, the more I tried even to do it, the greater was my powerlessness. Often when I wished to say something, I stopped short, without being able to form an idea of what I had intended to say, and this served not a little to humiliate me.

CHAPTER XVII.

We went to the country, where I committed many faults, allowing myself to be too much carried away by my interior attraction. I thought I could do so, because my husband was amusing himself in building. He was, nevertheless, dissatisfied with it, for I left him too long without going to see him where he was, because he was constantly speaking to the workmen. I used to place myself in a corner, where I worked. I could hardly do anything from the strength of the attraction, which made the work fall from my hands. I passed hours in this way, without being able either to open my eyes or know what was going on in me, which was so simple, so peaceful, so sweet, that I sometimes said to myself, "Is heaven more peaceful than I?" I told nobody my dispositions, for they had nothing by which they could be distinguished. I could not tell anything of them; all passed in the inmost of the soul, and the will enjoyed what I cannot express.

This disposition was almost continual in the early years, and gave me the greatest possible desire to suffer. I experienced that this disposition insensibly produced another in me, which was that my will was deadened each day, and imperceptibly lost itself in the sole will of God; and I knew by feeling that my interior disposition of simple repose in God, without performing particular acts, had the effect of taking away, little by little, my will, to make it

pass into God. This, moreover, made the soul so supple and pliable, that she at once was led to all that God could wish of her, though it should be painful. She became every day more indifferent to time, place, and states, and tasted in a wonderful way that everything needful for her was given at each moment, so that from this time she could desire nothing but what she had. This disposition extinguished all desires, and I sometimes said to myself, "What dost thou wish? What dost thou fear?" And I was astonished to find I could not desire or fear anything. Every place was my proper place. Everywhere I found my centre, because everywhere I found God. The tendency which appeared to be most marked was for solitude and love of the cross; it was what my whole soul inclined herself to.

As it was with difficulty I ordinarily had any time for praying, in order not to disobey my husband, who was unwilling I should rise from bed before seven o'clock, I bethought me I had only to kneel upon my bed, which, because he was ill, was in his room, as I endeavoured to show him my attention in everything. I rose at four o'clock, and remained on my bed. He thought I slept, and did not perceive it; but this affected my health and did me harm, for as my eyes were heavy from the small-pox I had had only eight months before, and which had left a serious affection of the eyes, this want of sleep made me unable to pray without falling asleep, and I did not sleep a moment in quiet, as I was apprehensive of not waking up. After dinner I went to pray my half-hour, and, though I was in no way sleepy, I fell asleep at once. I disciplined myself with nettles to keep awake, without being able to succeed.

As we had not yet built the chapel, I could not go to Mass without the permission of my husband, for we were very distant from all kinds of churches, and as ordinarily he only allowed me on festivals and Sundays, I could not

communicate but on those days, however desirous I might be for it, unless some priest came to a chapel, which was a quarter of a league from our house, and let us know of it. As the carriage could not be brought out from the court-yard without being heard, I could not elude him. I made an arrangement with the guardian of the Recolets, who was a very holy man. He pretended to go say Mass for somebody else, and sent a monk to inform me. It had to be in the early morning, that my husband might not know of it, and, although I had much trouble in walking, I went a quarter of a league on foot, because I dared not have the horses put to the carriage for fear of awaking my husband. O my God, what a desire did you not give me to receive you! and although my weariness was extreme, all that was nothing to me. You performed miracles, O my Lord, in order to further my desires; for besides that, ordinarily on the days I went to hear Mass, my husband woke later, and thus I returned before his waking,—how many times have I set out from the house in such threatening weather that the maid I took with me said that it would be out of the question for me to go on foot, I should be soaked with rain. I answered her, with my usual confidence, "God will assist us;" and did I not arrive, O my Lord, without being wetted? No sooner was I in the chapel than the water fell in torrents. The Mass was no sooner finished than the rain ceased entirely, and gave me time to return to the house, where, immediately upon my arrival, it recommenced with greater violence. What is surprising is that during many years, while I have thus acted, it has never happened that I was deceived in my confidence. This goodness you had for me, my God, gave me such a submission to your providence, that I could not trouble myself or be disquieted about anything whatsoever. When I was in the town, and did not find any one who could see me, I was astonished at priests coming up to me and asking if I wished to communicate; that they would give me the

communion. I was not so foolish as to refuse, O my Love, this present that you yourself made me; for I did not doubt it was you who inspired them with this charity. Before I had made my arrangements with the Recolets to come and say Mass in the chapel of which I have just spoken, you sometimes awaked me, O my God, by a start, with a strong instinct to get up and go to that chapel, that I should there find Masses. The maid I took with me said, "But, Madame, you are about, perhaps, to fatigue yourself to no purpose; there will probably be no Mass said," for this chapel was not served regularly, and the only Masses were those that were caused to be said from time to time through the devotion of an individual. I went full of faith, in spite of what the maid did to dissuade me; on arriving, I found the priest dressing himself to ascend to the altar.

If I could tell in detail the providences you had for me, which were continual, and threw me into astonishment, there would be material to fill volumes. You made me find providences quite ready for writing to Mother Granger when I was most pressed with troubles, and I felt strong instincts to go out sometimes to the gate, where I found a messenger from her, who brought me a letter that could not otherwise have reached my hands. What I tell is nothing in comparison of what there were. These sorts of providences were continual.

I had great confidence in Mother Granger. I concealed from her none of my sins nor of my troubles. I would not have done the least thing without telling it to her. I practised no austerities but those she permitted me. It was only my interior dispositions I could not tell, because I knew not how to explain them, being very ignorant of these things from never having read or heard of them. My confessor and my husband forbade me anew to see her. It was almost impossible for me to obey, because I had very great crosses, and sometimes some little expression escaped me through infidelity, when nature was so sorely

oppressed. This little word brought upon me so many crosses, I thought I had committed great faults; in such confusion was I. I carried within me a continual condemnation of myself, so that I regarded my crosses as defects, and believed I brought them on myself. I knew not how to unravel all this, nor how to remedy it; for oftentimes an involuntary forgetfulness gave rise to dissatisfaction of several weeks. I made a pretext of going to see my father, and I ran to Mother Granger; but as soon as this was discovered there were crosses that I cannot express, for it would be difficult to tell the excess to which their anger against me proceeded. The difficulty of writing to her was not less, for, as I had an extreme horror of lies, I forbade the lackeys lying; and when they were met they were asked where they went, whether they did not carry letters. My mother-in-law took up her position in a little porch, so that none could go out of the house without her seeing them, and their passing near her. She used to ask them where they went, and what they were carrying. It had to be told her, and when she knew I had written to Mother Granger, there was a terrible commotion. Sometimes when going on foot to the Benedictines, I had shoes brought, that it might not be seen where I had been, for it was far; but all my precautions were useless, for I dared not go alone, and those who followed me had orders to tell wherever I went. If they failed in it, they were punished or sent away.

They constantly spoke evil to me of this holy woman, whom in their hearts they esteemed; but God willed I should be in continual trouble and contradiction, for as I loved her much, I could not hinder myself from defending and speaking well of her; and this threw them into such anger, they watched still more closely to hinder me from going to see her. I, however, did all I could to please them. It was my constant study, without being able to succeed in it, and as I believed devotion consisted in pleasing them, I

was in despair and angry with myself for all the torment they caused me, thinking it was my fault. One of the greatest troubles is to believe a thing to be a matter of duty, and to labour incessantly to do it, without, however, being able to succeed. It is the course of guidance you have observed with me, O my God, so long as I was keeping house. I sometimes complained of it to Mother Granger, who said to me, "How should you content them, since for more than twenty years I am doing what I can for that purpose without being able to succeed?" for as my mother-in-law had two daughters in her convent, she found fault with everything.

The cross I felt most was to see my son revolt against me, whom they inspired with such a scorn for me, I could not see him without dying of grief. When I was in my room with any of my friends, he was sent to listen to what I said; and as the child saw it pleased them, he invented a hundred things to go and tell them. What caused me the most pain was the loss of this child, with whom I had taken extreme trouble. If I surprised him in a lie, which often happened, I dared not reprove him. He told me, "My grandmother says you have been a greater liar than I." I answered him, "It is because I have been so I better know the odiousness of this vice and the difficulty of freeing one's self from it; and it is for this very reason that I will not suffer it in you." He used to say very offensive things to me, and, because he observed the deference I had for his grandmother and his father, when in their absence I wished to reprove him for anything, he reproached me that I wanted to play the mistress because they were not there. They approved all this in the child, so that it strengthened him in his evil dispositions. One day this child went to see my father, and indiscreetly wished to speak of me to my father, as he used to his grandmother. My father was moved to tears, and came to the house to beg they would punish him; but nothing was

done, though they promised my father. I had not the strength to chastise him. Similar scenes often happened, and as the child grew bigger, and there was every probability his father would not live, I feared the consequences of so bad an education. I told it to Mother Granger, and she consoled me, and said that, as I could not remedy it, I must suffer it and surrender all to God; that this child would be my cross.

Another of my troubles was that I could not see my attention to my husband was pleasing to him. I knew well I displeased him when I was not there; but when I was he never showed any sign that he was pleased at it, nor at what I did. On the contrary, he had nothing but repugnance for everything that came from me. I sometimes trembled when I approached him, for I well knew I should do nothing to his taste; and if I did not come near him, he complained of it. He was so disgusted with broths, he could not look at them, and those who brought them to him were ill received. Neither my mother-in-law nor any of the servants was willing to bring them, for fear of suffering from his vexation. I was the only one who did not refuse. I used to go and carry them to him, and let his anger exhaust itself; then I endeavoured pleasantly to induce him to take them, and when he got more angry, I patiently waited; then I said to him, "I prefer being scolded many times in the day to doing you harm by not bringing you what is necessary for you." Sometimes he took them; at other times he pushed them away; but, as he saw my perseverance, he was often constrained to take them. When he was in good humour, and I brought him something that would have been agreeable, my mother-in-law took it out of my hands in order to carry it to him; and as he thought I did not attend to these things, he was annoyed with me, and gave his mother great thanks. Love hindered me from saying anything, and I suffered all in silence. I used all my efforts to win

my mother-in-law, through my attentions, my presence, my services; yet I was not clever enough to succeed. O my God, how wearisome without you would be a life like that! This conduct I have just mentioned has always continued, with the exception of some very short intervals, which served only to make things harder and more felt by me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was eight or nine months after I had the small-pox that Father La Combe passed by the place of my residence. He came to the house, bringing me a letter from Father La Mothe, who asked me to see him, as he was a friend of his. I had much hesitation whether I should see him, because I greatly feared new acquaintances. However, the fear of offending Father La Mothe led me to do it. This conversation, which was short, made him desire to see me once more. I felt the same wish on my side; for I believed he either loved God or was quite prepared to love him, and I wished everybody to love him. God had already made use of me to win three monks of his order. The eagerness he had to see me again led him to come to our country house, which was only half a league from the town. Providence made use of a little accident that happened, to give me the means of speaking to him; for as my husband, who greatly enjoyed his cleverness, was conversing with him, he felt ill, and having gone into the garden, my husband told me to go and look for him, lest anything might have occurred. I went there. This Father said that he had remarked a concentration and such an extraordinary presence of God on my countenance, that he said to himself, "I have never seen a woman like that;" and this was what made him desire to see me again. We conversed a little, and you permitted, O my God, that I said

to him things which opened to him the way of the interior. God bestowed upon him so much grace, through this miserable channel, that he has since declared to me he went away changed into another man. I preserved a root of esteem for him, for it appeared to me he would be God's; but I was very far from foreseeing that I should ever go to a place where he would be.

My dispositions at this time were a continual prayer, without my recognizing it. I only felt a great repose, and a great savour of the presence of God, who appeared to me so intimate that he was more in me than I myself. The feelings of it were sometimes stronger and so penetrating that I could not resist them, and Love deprived me of all freedom. Sometimes there was such dryness that I felt only the pain of absence, which was so much the harsher for me in proportion as the presence had been more felt. I thought that I had lost Love, for in these alternations, when Love was present, I so forgot my griefs, they appeared to me only as a dream, and in the absences of Love it seemed to me that he must never return, and as it appeared to me always it was through my fault he had withdrawn from me, this made me inconsolable. If I had been able to persuade myself that it had been a state through which it was necessary to pass, I should not have been troubled, since love for the will of God would have made all things easy to me; the peculiarity of this prayer being to give a great love for the order of God, a sublime faith, and so perfect a confidence, that one could no longer fear anything, whether perils, dangers, death, life, spirit, or thunder; on the contrary, it rejoices, it gives a great abnegation of self, of its interests, of its reputation, and an oblivion of all things.

At home I was accused of everything that was ill done, or spoiled, or broken. I at once told the truth, that it was not I. They persisted, and I made no answer. Then I was accused, not only of the fault, but of having lied. Although it was told to visitors, afterwards when I was alone

with them, I did not disabuse them. Oftentimes I heard things said in my presence to my friends likely to deprive me of their esteem, but I never spoke to them thereon. Love wished secrecy, and to suffer everything without justification. If through infidelity I happened to justify myself, I had no success, and brought upon myself new crosses both without and within. But in spite of all this, I was so in love with the cross, that my greatest cross would have been to have been without it. You sometimes, O my God, removed from me the cross, to make me feel it the more; and it was then that you redoubled my esteem, taste, and desire of it, which was sometimes in such excess, it devoured me. When the cross was removed from me for some moments, it seemed to me it was owing to the ill use I had made of it, and that some infidelity had deprived me of so great a blessing; for I never knew better its value than in its loss. O kindly cross, my dear delight, my faithful companion, as my Saviour was incarnate only to die between your arms, should I not be conformed to him in this; and wilt thou not be the means to unite me to him for ever? I often said to you, O my Love, "Punish me in any other manner, but do not take from me the cross!"

Although the love of the cross was so great in me it made me languish when the cross was absent, no sooner did it return to me, that lovable cross, object of my desires and of my hopes, than it concealed from me its beauties to show me only its rigours, so that the cross was keenly felt by me; and, as soon as I committed any fault, God deprived me of it anew, and then it appeared to me in all its beauty, and I could not console myself for not having given it the reception it merited. I then felt myself burning with love for it. It returned, that amiable cross, with so much the more force, as my desire was the more vehement. I could not reconcile two things that appeared to me so much opposed—to desire the cross with so much ardour,

and to support it with so much difficulty. These alternations render it a thousand times more felt, for the spirit adapts itself gradually to the cross, and when it commences to bear it strongly, it is taken away for a little time, in order that its return may surprise and overwhelm it. Moreover, when one bears the cross uniformly, one rests upon it, and one even becomes so accustomed to it that it does not occasion so much pain, for the cross has something noble and delicate, which furnishes a great support to the soul.

The crosses you sent me, O my God, were arranged in such a way, through your providence, that they could not produce this effect. Your perfectly wise hand fitted them in such a way, whether by often changing them, whether by increasing them, that they were always new to me. Oh, how well you know, my God, to weight the crosses in the admirable economy that you there observe! It is you alone who know how to crucify in a manner suited to the capacity of the creature. You constantly give new ones, and such as we do not expect. The interior crosses kept pace with the exterior, and they were very similar. Your redoubled absences made me die of grief. When you had given me, O my God, stronger proofs of your love, and my heart thought only of loving you, you permitted some unforeseen faults; then you absented yourself so long, and so harshly, that you seemed bound never to return, and when my soul began to resign herself, and to recognize that this state was more beneficial to her than that of abundance, seeing that from the latter she nourished her self-hood, and did not make of it the full use that she ought, then you returned more powerfully, and my joy was so much the greater as my grief had been deeper. I believe that if God did not maintain this procedure, the soul would never die to herself, for self-love is so dangerous, it attaches itself and becomes accustomed to everything.

What caused me most trouble in this time of confusion and crucifixion without and within, was an inconceivable tendency to hastiness, and when any answer a trifle too sharp escaped me, which served not a little to humiliate me, I was told I was in mortal sin. Nothing less than this rigorous guidance, O my God, was needed with me, for I was so proud, so hasty, and naturally so contradictory in temper, wishing always to prevail, and thinking my reasons better than those of others, that if you had spared me those hammer-blows, you would never have polished me to your taste; for I was so vain I was ridiculous. All these crosses were needed to reduce me. Applause made me insupportable. I had the defect of praising my friends to excess, and blaming others without reason. With all my heart I wish to make known my paltriness. It seems, my God, to serve admirably as shadows to the picture that you have the goodness to produce in me. The more criminal I have been, the more I owe you, and the less I can attribute to myself any good. Oh, how blind are men who attribute to man the sanctity God communicates to him! I believe, my God, you have saints who, after your grace, are extremely indebted to their fidelity. As for me, my God, I am indebted only to you; it is my pleasure, it is my glory,—I could not say it too often.

I bestowed a great deal in charity. You had given me, O my God, so much love for the poor, that I would have liked to supply all their wants. I could not see them in their wretchedness without reproaching myself for my wealth. I deprived myself of what I could in order to succour them. The best that was served me at table was at once removed, owing to the orders I had given, and carried to them. There were hardly any poor in the place where I resided who did not feel the effects of the charity you had given me for them. It seemed, O my God, that you scarcely wanted alms except from me. I was

applied to for everything that others refused, and I said to you, "O my Love, it is your wealth; I am only the steward of it; I must distribute it according to your will." I found means of assisting them without letting myself be known, because I had a person who distributed my alms in secret. When there were families ashamed of receiving charity, I sent it to them as if I had owed it to them. I clothed those who were naked, and I had girls taught to earn their livelihood, especially those who were good-looking, in order that, being occupied and having the means of living, they might be saved from the occasion of ruining themselves. You even made use of me, O my God, to withdraw some from their irregularities. There was one of good birth and handsome, who died very saintly. I furnished milk for the little children, and particularly at Christmas I redoubled my charities for the little children, in honour of the Child Jesus, who was the centre of my love. I went to see the sick—to relieve them, to make their beds. I compounded ointments, and dressed their wounds. I buried the dead. I secretly supplied artisans and shopkeepers with the means of keeping up their shops. It would be hardly possible to carry charity further than our Lord made me carry it, according to my state, both as wife and widow.

Our Lord, in order to purify me more thoroughly from the mixture I might make of his gifts with my "*own*"-love, placed me under very severe interior trials. I began to experience that the virtue, which had been so sweet and so easy for me, became an insupportable weight, not that I did not extremely love it, but I found myself powerless to practise it as I had learned it. The more I loved it, the more I struggled to acquire some virtue I saw lacking to me, I fell, it seemed to me, into the very opposite of it. There was only one thing in which you had always afforded me a visible protection—it was chastity. You gave me a very great love for it, and you placed its effects in

my soul, putting away, even during my marriage, by providences, sicknesses, and other means, that which might weaken it even innocently; so that, from the second year of my marriage, God so alienated my heart from all sensual pleasures, that marriage has been for me in every way a very severe trial. For many years, it seems to me that my heart and spirit are so separated from my body, that it does things as if it did not do them. If it eats or refreshes itself, it is done with such an aloofness that I am astonished at it, and with an entire mortification of vivacity of sentiment for all natural functions. I believe I say enough to make myself understood.

CHAPTER XIX.

To resume the thread of my narrative, I will say that the small-pox had so injured one eye that I feared losing it. A gland at the corner of the eye was relaxed, and from time to time abscesses formed between the nose and the eye, which caused me very great pain until they were lanced. I could not endure the pillow, owing to the excessive swelling of my whole head. The least noise was torture to me, and providence permitted that during this time a very great noise was made in my room. Although this caused me much pain, the time was nevertheless for me a delightful one for two reasons—first, because I was left alone in my bed, where I kept a very sweet retreat; the second, because it gratified the hunger I had for suffering, which was so great that all bodily austerities would have been like a drop of water to extinguish a great fire. I often had my teeth pulled out, although they did not pain me. It was a refreshment for me, and when my teeth pained me I did not think of having them pulled out; on the contrary, they became my good friends, and I was regretful of losing them without pain. I once poured molten lead on my naked flesh, but it did not cause any pain, because it flowed off and did not stick. In sealing letters I let Spanish wax fall on me, and this causes more pain, because it sticks. When I held a candle, I let it come to an end and burn me for a long time. These are

not crosses, nor pains. Our own choice can cause us only light crosses. It is for you, O my Crucified Love, to cut them after your model in order to render them heavy. I do not wonder you are painted in the shop of St. Joseph making crosses. Oh, how skilful you are at this work!

2. I asked leave to go to Paris to have my eye treated, much less, however, for that reason than to see M. Bertot, whom Mother Granger had a little before given me as director, and who was a man of profound illumination. It was then decided I should go to Paris. I went to say farewell to my father, and he embraced me with very great tenderness. He did not think, any more than I, it was for the last time. Paris was no longer for me a place to be dreaded. The world served only to make me concentrated, and the noise of the streets increased my prayer. I saw M. Bertot, who was not as useful to me as he would have been if at that time I had had the gift of explaining myself; but God so conducted me that, whatever desire I had to conceal nothing, I could not tell him anything. As soon as I spoke to him, everything was taken away from my mind, and I could only remember some defects I told him. My inner disposition was too simple to be able to tell anything of it, and as I saw him very seldom, and nothing dwelt in my mind, and I read nothing similar to what I experienced, I knew not how to explain myself; besides, I desired to let him know only the evil that was in me, for which reason M. Bertot has never known me until after his death. This has been very useful for me, in depriving me of all support, and making me die to myself.

I resolved, after having seen M. Bertot, and finished my cure, to go and pass the ten days from Ascension to Pentecost in an abbey four leagues from Paris, the Abbess of which had much friendship for me. I thought I should there conveniently keep a retreat of ten days. I had at that time an extremely strong interior attraction,

and it seemed to me, O my God, that my union with you was continual. I experienced that it constantly grew deeper and withdrew from the sensible, becoming more simple, but at the same time closer and more intimate.

On the Day of St. Erasmus, the patron of that convent, at four in the morning, I awoke with a start, having a vivid impression my father was dead. I had no rest till I had prayed for him as for one dead, and, having done it, I was no more troubled; but there remained with me a strong conviction of his death, together with an extreme prostration and a pleasing grief, which so overwhelmed my body that it was reduced to very great weakness. I went to the church, where I no sooner was than a faint seized me, and, after I recovered, there remained a loss of voice, and I could not speak. I could not eat the smallest thing —the concentration and the grief were too powerful. My soul was in a divine contentment and strength, and my exterior was overwhelmed with grief and weakness. I should not have perceived any grief, so great was the contentment of my soul, if it had not made this powerful impression on my body.

In all these blows, and in an infinity of others, I remarked from the beginning that my will was so supple for all your wills, O my God, that it had not even a repugnance to what you were doing, however hard it might appear to nature; so that I had no need of resigning myself and submitting. I could not even do any act, because the thing appeared to me all done in me; there was no longer submission nor resignation, but union of my will to yours, O my God, which was such that it seemed to me mine had disappeared. I knew not where to find that "my will;" but as soon as I sought a will, I found only yours. Mine did not appear even in its effects, which are the desires, tendencies, and inclinations. It seemed to me it would have been impossible to will anything but what you were doing in me. If I had a will, it appeared to me that it was

with yours, like two lutes in perfect accord; that which is not touched gives forth the same sound as the one touched: it is only one same sound and one single harmony. It is this union of the will which establishes the soul in perfect peace. Although my state was already such, my will was, however, not lost, though it was so as to its operations; for the strange states it has been necessary for me since to pass through have made me see what it costs before it has lost all that is "own," in all its circumstances and in all its extent, in order that the soul may no longer retain any interest either of time or of eternity, but the sole interest of God alone in the manner he himself knows, and not in our fashion of conceiving. How many souls there are who think their wills entirely lost, who yet are very far from it! They would see that they still subsist, if our Lord put them to the last proofs. Who is there who does not wish something for himself, be it self-interest, wealth, honour, pleasure, ease, liberty, salvation, eternity? And he who thinks that he does not hold to these blessings, because he possesses them, would soon perceive his attachment if he had to lose them. If in a whole century there are three persons who are so dead to everything that they wish to be the plaything of providence, without any exception, they are prodigies of grace. As I am not mistress of what I write, I follow no order; but it is no matter.

After dinner, while I was with the Abbess, whom I told I had very strong presentiments my father was very ill, if not dead—we were conversing together a little about you, O my God, although I could hardly speak, so powerfully was I seized within and prostrated without—they came to tell her she was wanted in the parlour. It was a man who had come in haste, sent by my husband, because my father had fallen ill, and as he was so only twelve hours, he was dead when the man arrived. The Abbess came and told me, "Here is a letter from your husband, who sends you word your father is seriously ill." I said

to her, "He is dead, Madame; I cannot doubt it." I sent at once to Paris to hire a carriage, in order to travel more quickly. Mine was waiting for me half-way. I started at nine o'clock in the evening. They said that I would be lost, for I had with me no one I knew. I had sent my maid to Paris to put everything in order, and, as I was in a religious house, I had not kept lackeys with me. The Abbess told me that, since I believed my father dead, it was rashness for me to expose myself in this way; that carriages with difficulty passed, even the road I must follow not being marked out. I replied that it was for me an indispensable duty to go and succour my father; that I ought not, for a simple presentiment, to excuse myself from this duty. I set out then alone, abandoned to providence, with persons strangers to me. My weakness was so great that I could not support myself at the back of the carriage, and I had often to get out, in spite of my weakness, in consequence of the dangerous state of the road. In this way I had to pass by night through a forest which is a cut-throat place. I was still in it as midnight struck. That forest is celebrated for the murders and robberies which have been there committed. The boldest persons feared it. As for me, O my God, I could not fear anything. The abandonment I was in to your care made me so utterly forget myself, that I could not reflect upon all this. Oh, what fears and vexations does a soul that is abandoned spare herself!

I travelled, then, within five leagues of our residence by myself, with my grief and my Love as companions; but at this place I found my confessor and a female relative, who were waiting for me. I could not tell the trouble I suffered when I saw my confessor; for besides that, while quite alone, I tasted an inexplicable contentment, he, having no knowledge of my state, opposed it, and gave me no freedom. My grief was of a nature that I could not shed a tear, and I was ashamed at learning a thing I knew

only too well, without giving any external sign of grief and shedding tears. The peace I possessed within was so profound that it spread over my countenance. Moreover, the state I was in did not permit me to speak, nor perform those external acts which are ordinarily expected from persons of piety. I could only love and keep silent.

I arrived at home, and found they had already buried my father, owing to the great heat. It was ten o'clock at night. Every one was already dressed in mourning. I had travelled thirty leagues in one day and one night. As I was very weak, as well because my state undermined me, as because I had not taken food, I was at once put to bed. About two hours after midnight my husband got up, and, having left my room, he suddenly returned, crying, with all his strength, "My daughter is dead!" It was my only daughter, a child as much loved as she was amiable. You had provided her, O my God, with so many graces, spiritual and corporal, that one must have been insensible not to love her. There was noticeable in her a quite extraordinary love for God. She was constantly found in corners in prayer. As soon as she perceived that I prayed to God, she came near me to pray, and when she knew I had done it without her, she wept bitterly, and said, "You pray to God, and I do not pray to him." As my concentration was great, as soon as I was at liberty I used to close my eyes, and she used to say to me, "You sleep?" then suddenly, "Oh, it is you are praying to my good Jesus!" and place herself near me to pray. Holy Wednesday, four months before her death, she was given the cross in church to kiss. But when she saw them take it from her to give to others, she cried out in the church, with all her might, "They are taking away my Spouse! Give me back my Spouse!" They had to give her the crucifix. She took it, and pressing it to her heart she cried, "Here is my Spouse. I will never have any other." She oftentimes suffered the whip of her

grandmother, because she said she would never have any other Spouse than our Lord, without their being able to make her say otherwise. She was pure and modest as a little angel, very sweet and obedient. Her father, to test her obedience, gave her very nasty things to eat, and she ate them, in spite of her dislike, without saying anything. She was very beautiful, and had a very good figure. Her father loved her with passion, and she was very dear to me, much more for the qualities of her soul than for those of her body. I regarded her as my sole consolation on earth, for she had as much attachment for me as her brother had alienation.

She died of an unseasonable blood-letting. But what am I saying? She died by the hand of Love, who wished to despoil me of all. There remained to me only the son of my sorrow. He fell mortally ill. God gave him back to the prayers of Mother Granger, my only consolation after God. The news of the death of my daughter surprised me very much. My heart was, nevertheless, not shaken, although I saw myself deprived at the same time, without my having known it, of my father and my daughter, who were how dear to me, you know, O my God. My interior state was such that I could not be either more afflicted for all imaginable losses, nor more content for all possible blessings. It is necessary to have experienced these delicious griefs to comprehend them. I no more wept the daughter than the father. All I could say was, "You had given her to me, Lord. It pleases you to take her back. She was yours." The virtue of my father was so well known, and there would be so much to say, that I must keep silence instead of speaking of it. His confidence in God, his faith and his patience, were admirable. He was the scourge of heresies and novelties. My father and my daughter died in the month of July, 1672.

The eve of the Magdalen's Day of the same year, Mother Granger sent me—I know not by what inspiration

—a little contract already drawn up. She told me to fast that day and to bestow some extraordinary alms, and next morning, the Magdalen's Day, to go and communicate with a ring on my finger, and when I had returned home to go into my closet, where there was an image of the Holy Child Jesus in the arms of his holy mother, and to read my contract at his feet, sign it, and put my ring to it. The contract was this: "I, N——, promise to take for my Spouse Our Lord, the Child, and to give myself to him for spouse, though unworthy." I asked of him, as dowry of my spiritual marriage, crosses, scorn, confusion, disgrace, and ignominy; and I prayed him to give me the grace to enter into his dispositions of littleness and annihilation, with something else. This I signed; after which I no longer regarded him but as my Divine Husband. Oh, how that day has been since for me a day of grace and of crosses! These words were at once put into my mind, that he would be to me "a Husband of blood." Since that time he has taken me so powerfully for his own, that he has perfectly consecrated to himself my body and my spirit through the cross.

O Divine Spouse of my soul, it seems to me that you then made of me your living temple, and that you yourself consecrated it as churches are consecrated. Accordingly, at the celebration of festivals for the dedication of the church, did you not make me understand that this consecration was a figure of the consecration that you had made of me for yourself? And as churches are marked with the sign of the cross, you marked me also with this same sign. It is this admirable sign with which you mark your most chosen friends, according to what St. John shows in his Apocalypse. And as at the consecration of churches there are candles, which are lighted in the place for the crosses, and the candle represents faith and charity, so I have ground to believe that you have not permitted those virtues to abandon me since that time;

but as the characteristic of the candle is to gradually consume itself by its own fire, and to destroy itself by the light and heat which make it live, so it seemed to me that it was necessary for my heart to be perfectly destroyed and annihilated by this fire of love, and that this fire was attached to the cross only to teach me that the cross and love would be the immortal marks of my consecration.

Since that time crosses have not been spared me, and although I had had many previously, I may say they were only the shadow of those that I have had to suffer in the sequel. As soon as crosses gave me any moment of respite, I said to you, "O my dear Spouse, I must enjoy my dowry; give me back my cross." You oftentimes granted my request. At other times you made me wait for it, and ask more than once, and I then saw I had rendered myself unworthy of it through some infidelity towards this same cross. When the overwhelming and abandonment were more severe, you sometimes consoled me, but ordinarily my nourishment was a desolation without consolation.

The Day of the Assumption of the Virgin, the same year 1672, I was in a strange desolation, whether owing to the redoubling of the exterior or the overwhelming of the interior crosses, and I had gone to hide myself in my closet to give some outlet to my grief. I said to you, "My God and my Spouse, you alone know the greatness of my trouble." There occurred to me a certain wish, "Oh, if M. Bertot knew what I suffer!" M. Bertot, who rarely wrote, and even with considerable trouble, wrote me a letter of this very date on the cross—the most beautiful and the most consoling he has written on that subject. It must be noted he was more than a hundred leagues from where I was. Sometimes I was so overwhelmed, and nature so distracted by the continual crosses, which gave me no respite, or, if they seemed to give me an instant of repose, it was only to return with more fury, and nature was sometimes at such a point

from them that, when alone, I perceived without paying attention to it, that my eyes turned from side to side as if distracted, seeking if they could not find some relief. A word, a sigh, a trifle, or to know that some one sympathized in my grief, would have relieved me; but this was not granted to me; not even to look towards the heaven, or make a complaint. Love held me then so close, that he willed that this miserable nature should be allowed to perish without giving it any food. It would have sometimes wished relief, and wished it with so much violence, that I suffered infinitely more in restraining it than from all the rest.

You gave my soul, O my dear Love, a victorious support, which made her triumph over the weaknesses of nature, and you even put the knife into her hand to destroy it without giving it a moment's respite; yet this nature is so malignant, so full of artifices to preserve its life, that at last it took on the *rôle* of nourishing itself from its despair. It found succour in the absence of all succour. This faithfulness during so continual an overwhelming served it for secret food—a fact which it concealed with an extreme care, in order not to be discovered; but your divine eyes were too penetrating not to discover its malignity. It is for this reason, O my Divine Shepherd, you changed your conduct towards it. You consoled it for a time with your crook and your staff; that is to say, by your conduct, as loving as it was crucifying; but it was only to reduce it to the last extremities, as I shall tell in the sequel.

CHAPTER XX.

A lady that I sometimes used to see, as she was wife of the governor of our town, had taken a liking to me, because, she said, my person and my manners did not displease her. She sometimes told me that she therein noticed something extraordinary. I believe this great attraction I had within shone out upon my exterior; for there was one day a man of the world, who said to an aunt of my husband, "I have seen your niece, but one clearly perceives she never loses the presence of God," which, having been reported to me, greatly surprised me, for I did not think he understood what it was to have God present in this way. This lady, I say, began to be touched by God, because once, when she wished to take me to the comedy, I was not willing to go; for I never used to go to it, and I made use of the continued illness of my husband for an excuse. She strongly pressed me, and said a continued illness like that ought not to hinder me from diverting myself; that my age was not such that I should confine myself to being a nurse. I explained to her the reasons I had for behaving so, but she concluded it was rather through a principle of piety I did not go, than because of my husband's illness, and, having strongly urged me to tell her my opinion on the subject of comedy, I told her I did not approve of this diversion, especially for women truly Christian. As she was much older than

I, what I said to her made so strong an impression on her mind that she never afterwards went to the comedy.

Once, being with her and with another lady, who spoke much and had even studied the Fathers, they engaged in a conversation where there was much talk of God. The lady spoke of him learnedly. I said hardly anything, for I was drawn to keep silence, being even grieved at this manner of speaking of God. The lady, my friend, came to see me next day, and told me God had so powerfully touched her, she could no longer resist. I ascribed it to the conversation of the other lady, but she said to me, "Your silence had something that spoke to me, even to the depth of the soul, and I could not enjoy what she was saying to me." On this we spoke with open hearts. It was then, O my God, that you so entered into the depth of her heart, that you never after withdrew up to her death. She continued so a-hungered for you, O my God, that she could not bear to hear anything else spoken of. As you wished her to be entirely yours, at the end of three months you took from her her husband, whom she loved extraordinarily, and by whom she was greatly loved. You sent her crosses so terrible and at the same time graces so strong, that you made yourself absolute master of her heart. After the death of her husband, and the loss of almost all her wealth, she came to within four leagues of us, to an estate she still had. She obtained my husband's consent for me to go and spend eight days with her, to console her for her losses. God gave her, through my means, all that was necessary for her. She had much cleverness. She was astonished that I said to her things so far above my grasp. I should have been myself surprised at it if I had reflected, for my natural intellect was not capable of those things. It was you, O my God, who gave them to me for her sake, making the waters of your grace flow into her soul without considering the unworthiness of the channel which you willed to use. Since that time her

soul has been the temple of the Holy Spirit, and our hearts have been united by an indissoluble bond.

We went together on a little journey, where you caused me, O my God, to exercise abandonment and humiliation without its costing me anything, for your grace was so powerful it sustained me. We were all near perishing in a river. They were in a terrible fright; all cast themselves out of the carriage, which sank in a quicksand. I remained so abandoned and so possessed interiorly, that I could not even think on the danger. You delivered me from it, without my having even thought of avoiding it. I was so concentrated and so seized interiorly that I could do nothing but let myself be drowned, if my God had permitted it. It will be said that I am rash. I believe it is true, but I prefer to perish through too much confidence than to save myself. But what am I saying? We perish only because we cannot trust ourselves to you, O my King. It is this which constitutes my pleasure, to owe all things to you, and it is this which renders me content in my abjectness, which I would rather keep all my life by abandoning myself, than destroy by resting upon myself. I would not, however, advise another to behave in this way, unless he was in the same dispositions I then was.

4. As my husband's ailments became every day severer and more obstinate, he resolved to go to Ste. Reine, for which he had a great devotion. He appeared to me to have a great desire of being alone with me, so that he could not help saying, "If people never spoke to me against you, I should be more pleased and you more happy." I committed many faults from self-love and self-consciousness on this journey, and as I was in a very great interior abandonment, I had the means of experiencing what I should be without you, O my God. For some time already you had withdrawn from me that sweet interior correspondence, which previously I had only to follow; I had become like one astray, who no longer found either way, path, or

route, but as I reserve for another place a description of the terrible darkness through which I have passed, I will continue the course of the narrative. My husband, on his return from Ste. Reine, wished to pass by St. Edme, for, as he had no children but my eldest son, who was often at the gates of death, and he wished extremely to have heirs, he urgently asked for them through the intercession of that saint. As for me, I could ask for nothing; but he was heard, and God gave me a second son. The time when I was near my confinement was for me one of great consolation; for, although I was very ill at my confinement, the love I had for the cross made me face it with pleasure. I rejoiced that nature must suffer so much; besides, as I was some weeks after my confinement without their venturing to make me speak, owing to my great weakness, it was a time of retreat and silence for me, when I endeavoured to compensate myself for the little leisure I had at other seasons for praying to you, O my God, and remaining alone with you.

I will not speak here of the extraordinary things that took place during my pregnancy, having written it elsewhere. I will only say that, during those nine months, God took a new possession of me. He did not leave me an instant, and those nine months passed in continued uninterrupted enjoyment. As I had already experienced interior trouble, weakness, and desertions, this appeared to me a new life. It seemed to me I already enjoyed blessedness; but how dearly this happy time cost me! since this enjoyment, which appeared to me entire and perfect, and so much the more perfect as it was more inward, more remote from the sensible, more constant, more free from vicissitudes, was yet only preparatory to a total privation for many years, without any support or hope of return.

This terrible state commenced with the death of a person who was my sole consolation, after God. I had, before my return from Ste. Reine, learned that Mother

Granger was dead. I declare that this blow was the most severely felt of any I yet had. You left me to drink, O my God, all its bitterness, and as you left me then in simple weakness, I suffered much at seeing myself thereby deprived of all created supports. It seemed to me that if I had been present at her death, I should have been able to speak to her, and learn something; but God has willed that I have been absent in almost all my losses, in order to render the blows more afflictive. It is true, some months before her death, I had a perception (although I could see this Mother only with extreme difficulty, and suffering for it), she was yet a support to me; and our Lord made me know that it would be good for me to be deprived of it. But at the time she died that was no longer present to me. As I felt myself utterly deserted inwardly and outwardly, I thought only of the loss I sustained in a person who would have conducted me on a road where I no longer found track nor path. O my God, how well you know how to inflict your blows! You had left me this Mother at a time when she was but little useful to me, since from the care you had of me and your continual guidance of me, except at certain times, I had nothing to do but to follow you step by step, while at the time that you deprived me as to the interior of all perceived guidance, that you overturned my paths, that you blocked my ways with squared stones—it is at this time you took from me her who could guide me in this road, all devious, covered with precipices and sowed with thorns.

O adorable conducting of my God! There must be no guide for him whom you wish to lead astray, no conductor for him whom you wish to destroy. After having saved me with so much mercy, O my Love, after having conducted me by the hand in your paths, it seems that you have been eager for my destruction. Shall not one say of you that you save only to destroy; that you no longer go to seek the lost sheep? You take pleasure in building that which is destroyed and destroying what is built.

Therein, then, is the play of your magnificence, and it is in this way you overthrow the temple so carefully and almost miraculously built by the hand of men, to rebuild one that shall not be made by the hand of men! O secrets of the incomprehensible wisdom of my God, unknown to any other but him! Yet it is an adorable wisdom which the men of the present day wish to penetrate, and to which they impose limits. They anticipate upon the knowledge of God, and desire not merely to equal, but to surpass it. "Oh, depth of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how incomprehensible are his judgments, and his ways impossible to find out! for who has known the thoughts of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?" Yet people wish to penetrate this wisdom, although it be "hid from the eyes of all living, unknown even to the birds of the heaven." Wisdom, of which one can have news only by death to all things, and by total loss. M. Bertot, although a hundred leagues from the place where Mother Granger died, had knowledge of her death and of her blessedness, as also had another monk. She died in lethargy, and as they spoke of me to her in order to rouse her, she said, "I have always loved her for God and in God," and spoke no more after. I had not any presentiment of her death.

To increase my exterior crosses, my brother changed towards me, for his hatred was noticed by everybody. His marriage took place at this time, and my husband had the amiability to go to it, although he was ill, and the road so bad and so covered with snow that we were on the point of upsetting more than fifteen times; but my brother, far from being grateful, quarrelled more than ever with my husband. I had to suffer from two persons who made me the mark for their vexation. On this occasion all the right was with my husband, and the wrong with my brother. The whole time I was at Orleans, where this wedding took place, I had a remnant of affection so strong that it devoured me. I committed many faults, for I gave way to

it too much, remaining too long at church, at the expense of the attention I owed my husband; but I was then so intoxicated with love that I only perceived the fault when the remedy was past. I committed also another, which was in being too expansive in speaking to a Jesuit Father of what I then felt, which was very strong. He was one of those who admire these sorts of things, and, as it appeared to do him good, and I felt a great gratification in speaking to him, I gave way to it. It was a notable fault which happened to me sometimes at that period, but never since. Oh, how often one mistakes nature for grace! and how dead to self one must be for these outpourings to be from God! I had so many scruples at it, that I at once wrote to M. Bertot.

While returning from Orleans, I had the same preoccupation as in going there, so that, though there was much greater danger on the return, I had no attention for myself, but only for my husband, and on seeing the carriage upsetting, I said to him, "Have no fear; it is on my side it is turning over: you will not be injured." I believe everything might have perished, and I should not have been disturbed, and my peace was so profound nothing could shake it. If these times lasted, one would be too strong, but, as I said, they began to come only very rarely, and for a short period, and to be followed by longer and trying privations. On the return from the wedding, my brother treated me with extreme contempt. As I had had much attachment for him, these blows were keenly felt by me. Since that time he has greatly changed, and has turned towards God, although he has never altered as regards me. I am, however, glad he is reformed. The loss of my brother has been the more felt by me, as he cost me many crosses, both on the part of my husband and of others. I can say the crosses he has caused me and has procured for me since that time have been some of my greatest. It is not that he is not virtuous, but it is

an altogether special permission of God and his providence in conducting my soul, which has brought to pass that he and all the other persons of piety who have persecuted me have thought to render glory to God by doing it, and to acquire merits; and they were right; for what greater justice than this, that all creatures should be unfaithful to me, and declare themselves against her who had been so many times unfaithful to her God, and had taken the opposite side?

We had, further, after this, an affair that cost me great crosses, and which seemed to have been brought about simply for that. There was a person who conceived such an ill feeling towards my husband, that he determined to ruin him if he could. The only means he found was to make friends with my brother, in order to induce him to do readily what he wished. He agreed with him to demand from us in the name of Monsieur, the brother of the King, two hundred thousand livres, which he made out my brother and I owed him. My brother signed the documents under an assurance that he should not pay anything of it for his part. I believe his extreme youth engaged him in a business he, perhaps, did not understand. This affair gave so much annoyance to my husband, and justly, that I have reason to believe it greatly hastened his end. He was so indignant with me at this, for which I was no way responsible, that he could not speak to me without anger. He would not instruct me in the matter, and I knew not its nature. He said he was not willing to mix himself up in this business, that he was going to hand over my property and leave me to live as I could, and a hundred things still more harsh. On the other hand, my brother was not willing to canvass, nor that any one else should do so. The day it was to be decided, there was one portion of the judges who were both judges and parties. After Mass I felt myself strongly urged to go and see the judges. I was extremely surprised to find that I knew all the twists and nicetics of

this business, without knowing how I had been able to learn it. The first judge was so surprised to see a thing so different from what he thought, that he himself urged me to go and see the other judges, and especially the Intendant, who was acting uprightly, but who was misinformed. You gave, O my God, so much power to my words for making known the truth, that the Intendant could not sufficiently thank me for having made it known to him. He assured me that if I had not been to speak to him, the affair was lost; and when they saw the falsity of the whole business, they would have condemned the party to the costs, if we had not had to do with so great a Prince, who had only lent his name to officers that had misled him. To save the honour of Monsieur, judgment was given against us for fifty crowns, so that two hundred thousand livres were reduced to one hundred and fifty. My husband was very pleased at what I had done, but my brother appeared to me so angry at it, that if I had caused him a very great loss he could not have been more so.

CHAPTER XXI.

About this time I fell into a state of total privation, very great and very long; in a state of weakness and entire desertion, which lasted near seven years. O grief the most violent of griefs! This heart, which was occupied only with its God, found itself no longer occupied but with the creature. It seemed to be cast down from the throne of God to live, like Nebuchadnezzar, for seven years with the beasts. But before describing this deplorable state, which, through the altogether admirable use Divine Wisdom made of it, was advantageous to me, I must tell the infidelities I committed in it.

As I commenced to lose you, O my God, and to lose you utterly—at least as far as perceptible sentiment (because for a considerable time there was no question of the sensible or the distinct); as I commenced, I say, to lose you in this way, O my Love, it appeared to me that I fell each day into the purely natural, and that I no longer loved you at all—a thing which I had only experienced by alternations. For although, before entering into this state, I had experienced long privations, almost continual towards the close, I had however, from time to time, inflowings of your Divinity, so profound and so inward, so quick and so penetrating, that it was easy for me to judge that you were only concealed for me, but not lost. Although during the time of privations it appeared to me that I had lost

you totally, a certain profound support nevertheless subsisted, without the soul thinking she had it, and she has recognized this support only by its entire absence in the sequel. All the times that you returned with greater goodness and power, you returned also with greater magnificence, so that you re-established in a few hours the ruins of my infidelities, and you profusely compensated for my losses; but it was not the same during the whole time of which I am about to speak.

During the other privations my soul continually sought him whom she had lost. Her searching, though caused by her loss, and by a loss that she believed to arise from her own fault, was still a guarantee of her love; for one seeks not that which one does not love, and the languor she suffered from seeing herself deprived of her love was a mark of the fidelity of that same love. Moreover, she had a very great support, though it did not appear to her, which was that the heart was void of all love, and that she could say to her God, "If I love not you, I am confident I love nothing else;" but here it is quite the contrary; not only does it appear one no longer loves, but this heart so loving and so beloved finds itself filled only with the love of creatures and of itself. At all the other times one was not deprived of every facility for doing good; though one did it in a languishing and tasteless manner, often even with repugnance, one nevertheless did it; but here it is no longer repugnance, but impotence—an impotence of such a nature that the soul does not know her impotence; it appears only as an unwillingness to do it.

I have always remarked, these eighteen years back, that the time of great festivals, of those even for which I had a singular affection, was that when interiorly I was most forsaken. What will appear surprising is that when I communicated, however penetrated by God I might previously be, dryness took the place of abundance, and emptiness that of plenitude. At present I know very well its cause,

which was that, as my road was a road of death and of faith, the great festivals and the reception of the Sacrament operated in me according to the designs of God, death, faith, cross, spoliation, annihilation; for our God operates through his mysteries and through his Sacraments that which he operates through himself, so that if the state is entirely in the sentiments, the Sacraments and the mysteries celebrated at the festivals operate quick and tender sentiments of God. If the state is in light, they operate admirable lights, either active or passive, according to the degree of the soul. If it is faith, they will operate dryness, obscurity, more or less, according to the degree of faith, and so with the rest. They operate crosses, spoliation, annihilation, according to the designs of God for the souls and the degree of each one. It is the same with prayer—it is dry, obscure, crucifying, despoiling, annihilating, etc. Those who complain of prayer (supposing fidelity), and what they experience at the reception of the Sacraments, do it only for want of light; for there is always given to them what is needful for them, although not what they wish and desire. If one was thoroughly convinced of these truths, far from passing all his life in complaining of God and of himself, one would employ it only in making use in death and dying fidelity of all these different dispositions in which God places us, so that by causing death to us they would procure for us life.

For it is an admirable thing how all our welfare, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, consists in abandoning ourselves to God, leaving him to do in us and with us all that shall please him, with so much greater willingness as things satisfy us less; so that, by this submission and dependence upon the Spirit of God, all is given us, and in the hand of God all serves us admirably, even our weaknesses, our paltriness and defects—I say more, our sins, which are a fruit and a source of death, oftentimes become in the hand of God a source of life through the

humiliation they cause us. If the soul was faithful to leave herself in the hand of God, sustaining all his operations, gratifying and crucifying, leaving herself from moment to moment to be conducted and destroyed by the strokes and leadings of his divine providence, without complaining of God, nor wishing anything else but what she has, she would soon attain to the experience of eternal truth, although she should know only later the ways and the leadings of God with her.

But the misfortune is that we wish to conduct God, far from allowing ourselves to be conducted by him. We wish to point out a road in place of blindly following that which he traces for us; and this is the cause why many souls, which would be destined to enjoy even God in himself, and not his gifts in them, pass all their life in running after little consolations and feasting on them, confining themselves to that, and even making their happiness consist in that. For you, my dear children, if my chains and my captivity touch you, I pray you, they may serve to engage you to seek God only for himself; never to wish to possess him save by the death of all that you are, to enjoy him only in loss. Never aim to be anything in the ways of the intellect, but yield to the most profound annihilation.

I fell then into the purely natural; yet my infidelities were of a kind that would have appeared a good and virtue to any other but to my God, who does not judge virtue by the name people give it, but by the purity and uprightness of the heart that practises it. I felt my inclination grow each day, and that my heart, which previously was occupied and filled with its God alone, was full and occupied only with creatures. I used all sorts of penances, prayers, pilgrimages, and vows. It seemed, O my God, I found an increase of my ill in all that I took as a remedy for it, so that I entered upon an inconceivable desolation. I can say tears became my drink, and grief

my nourishment. Whereas your love, O my God, had put in my heart a peace as profound as it seemed unalterable, this inclination brought trouble and confusion into my heart with so much force that I could not resist the violence.

I had two enemies equally powerful, who never gained the victory one over the other, so that they mutually combated with the more obstinacy as the advantage never turned to either side. It was the desire of pleasing you, O my God, and the fear of displeasing you—a leaning of my whole centre towards you, O my supreme Felicity, and an impulse of my whole self towards the creature; but as this latter was strongly felt, the other appeared to me only as a thing that was not. Whenever I was alone, I shed torrents of tears, and I said with equal dryness and desolation, "Is it possible that I have received so many graces from God only to lose them; that I have loved him with so much ardour only to hate him eternally; that his benefits have served as matter for my ingratitude? His fidelity, shall it only be requited by my infidelity? Has my heart been so long filled with him alone, only in order to be the more empty of him; and has it been emptied of all created objects, only to be more strongly filled with them?" On the other hand, I could not find pleasure in conversations which I sought as if in spite of myself. I had within me an executioner, who tormented me without relaxation. I felt within me a pain that I could never make understood save by those who have experienced it.

I lost all prayer, being utterly unable to use any. The time I took for it was filled only with creatures, and quite void of God. It served only to make me better feel my loss and my misfortune, because then there was no diversion. I could no longer mortify myself, and my appetite woke up again for a thousand things, and when I used them I found therein no taste; so there remained to me only disgust at having been unfaithful, without having the

satisfaction I had promised myself. I could not express what I suffered, and the infidelities I committed during this time. I believed myself lost: for all I had for exterior and interior was taken from me. M. Bertot gave me no help, and God permitted that he misunderstood one of my letters, and even abandoned me for a long time in my greatest need, as I shall tell in its place.

What could I do in this state? The heaven was shut for me, and it seemed to me it was with justice. I could neither console myself nor complain of it. I had not any creature on earth to whom I could address myself, and if I wished to address myself to some saint, besides that I had not any facility, since for many years I found them only in God, I then found them only full of the fury of God. The Holy Virgin, for whom I had had a very great and tender devotion from my youth, appeared to me inaccessible. I knew not to whom to address myself, or where to find help; there was none either in heaven or on earth. If I wished to seek it in my central depth, and to find him who once possessed it so powerfully, not only did I find nothing there, but I was even rejected with violence. I was banished from all beings, without being able to find support or refuge in anything. This is a grief the most terrible of all, and which also causes death. I could no more practise any virtue, and the virtues which had been most familiar to me had more utterly abandoned me.

There was no longer for me a God, Husband, Father, Lover—if I dared to call him so. There was only a rigorous Judge, whose anger appeared to kindle every day. Oh, if I had been able to find in the abyss a place to conceal me from his fury, without withdrawing me from his justice, I would have availed myself of it. I could no more go to see the poor; either I forgot them entirely, or I no longer found the time for it, or I had a disgust for it that amounted to opposition. If I would do violence to myself, to go to them in spite of my repugnance, I found myself most part of the

time in veritable impotence. If, in short, I sometimes made an effort to go to them, I could not remain there a moment, and if I wished to speak to them, it was impossible for me. When I would force myself, I said absurdities that had not common sense. I could no longer remain a moment at church, and whereas formerly it was torture to me not to have time to pray, my torture then was to have time and to be obliged to be at church. I neither took in, nor heard anything. The Mass went on without my being able to pay any attention. I sometimes heard several in succession, in order to make up by the one the defect of that which had preceded, but it was still worse. My eyes, which formerly of themselves closed in spite of me, then continued open, without it being possible for me to close them or to concentrate myself a moment.

All creatures leagued themselves against me, and external crosses redoubled in proportion as those within increased. I would have liked to have practised penances, but besides that they had been forbidden to me at this time, in the disposition I was in, it was as if impossible for me to perform them. I had not the courage, and when I wished to try, everything fell from my hands. It seemed that God had given me M. Bertot only to deprive me of supports, and not for me to use. For after I had entered on this state, without his knowing anything of it, he forbade me all kinds of penances, and told me that I was not worthy of practising them. It was not hard to persuade me of this, since I thought there was not upon the earth a more wicked person than I. These sentiments were so keen at the commencement that there was not a criminal in the world I did not justify in my mind, while condemning myself: for that those men had offended God, and were offending him, while not knowing him, this appeared to me endurable by your goodness, O my God; but that a creature who had known you, who had loved you, and on whom you had bestowed graces enough to save an entire world,

should have become what I was, that appeared to me frightful.

I sometimes gave way to exterior hastiness, without any power to control myself. I could no longer restrain my tongue. I was like those children who cannot help themselves from falling. I made some verses which were subjects of infidelity for me. I resolved to make no more, but my resolutions were barren. It was enough for me to have formed a resolution, to immediately do the contrary. You deprived me of all facility for carrying it out. I could no longer speak of you, O my God; I envied all those who loved you. Oh, is it possible this heart, all fire, should have become ice; that this heart, so loving, should have fallen into the most utter indifference? It seemed to me at every moment as if hell were about to open to swallow me up, and that which then caused me so much terror would have afterwards been the object of my wishes; for it must be understood I believed myself guilty of all the sins of which I had the sentiments, and as I had the sentiment of all sins I believed myself to have the reality. I could not believe, O my God, that you should ever pardon me. Everything was so effaced from my mind that I no longer regarded myself but as a victim destined to hell. The illness I previously endured with pleasure became insupportable to me. A slight headache made me shudder; I felt in myself only movements of impatience. In place of that peace of paradise there was a trouble of hell. Formerly I rejoiced before my lying-in because I must suffer in it, and then I feared the shadow of pain.

CHAPTER XXII.

But before speaking further of a state which was only commencing, and the course of which has been so long and trying, I must resume where I stopped; and understand, that all I shall hereafter tell was accompanied by the state of which I have just spoken. As my husband approached his end, his ailments were without relaxation. He no sooner escaped from one illness than he fell into another: gout, fever, gravel, succeeded each other incessantly. He suffered great pain with considerable patience. He offered it to you, my God, and made a good use of it. The anger he had against me increased, because they multiplied reports, and did nothing but embitter him. He was the more susceptible of these impressions as his ailments gave him the greater tendency to vexation. Even that maid who tormented me sometimes took compassion on me, and came to fetch me as soon as I had gone into my closet, saying, "Come to monsieur, in order that your mother-in-law may not speak any more against you." I pretended to be ignorant of all, but he could not conceal from me his annoyance, nor even endure me. My mother-in-law at the same time no longer observed any measure, and all those who came to the house were witnesses of the continual rudeness to which I was subjected. What is surprising is that though I had the sentiments of which I have spoken, and the pains I have described and shall

describe, I nevertheless suffered with much patience; but this did not appear to me, owing to the frightful revolt I felt within against all that was said to me, and as I sometimes broke out in hastiness, but seldom, I thought that this joined to the inward revolt was a crime.

My husband, some time before his death, had built a chapel in the country where we spent part of the summer. I had the advantage of hearing Mass every day, and communicating, but not daring to do it every day openly, the priest kept a wafer without their noticing it, and as soon as they had gone out, he gave me the Communion. The dedication of this little chapel was celebrated, and though I already was beginning to enter upon the state I have just described, as soon as the blessing was commenced, suddenly I felt myself seized within, and my seizure, which lasted more than five hours, the whole time of the ceremony, was that our Lord made a new consecration of me to himself. This chapel was only the figure of that one which our Lord made in me; but in a manner so powerful, so real, though very inward, that it seems to me I was for him a temple consecrated for time and for eternity. I said to you, "O my God, let this temple never be profaned"—speaking of both one and the other—"and let your praises be sung there for ever." It seems you promised it to me, although everything was at once taken away, and there did not remain even a memory that could console me.

When I was at this country house, which was only a small pleasure house, before the chapel was built, I used to pray in the woods and in closets. As I greatly loved the cross, I caused crosses to be put up in many places, and these served me as a hermitage. How many times have you preserved me, O my God, from dangers and venomous beasts? Sometimes, without thinking of it, I knelt upon serpents, which were numerous, and they went off without doing me any harm. Have you not preserved me from a furious bull, though I had an antipathy for these animals,

and they for me, so that among many persons they would seek me out and run at me? I continued without concern, and it seemed their fury fell before me. I was shut up alone in a little wood, where was this furious bull. Every one cried out to take care. He took to flight without doing me any harm. If I could count all your providences regarding me, one would be charmed at them; but they were so frequent and so continued that I can only wonder and be astonished. You were continually attentive to me, as if I had been the only object of your cares. This has been very marked, especially at the commencement, and until I fell into the state I have just mentioned, when your divine providence seemed to have abandoned me, and delivered me to your justice. At the present moment I have no repugnance to write my life. Is there anything, O my God, but a multitude of kindnesses on your part; and on mine, ingratitude, infidelity, paltriness? All therein is for you glorious, and there is nothing but cause of confusion for me; you there give without limit to one who has nothing to return to you. If there is apparent some fidelity and some patience, it is you alone who effect it. If you cease an instant to sustain, or if through an amorous feint you make semblance of leaving me to myself, I cease to be strong, to become weaker than any creature. O my Lord, if my paltriness shows what I am, your bounties show what you are and the extreme dependence I am in on you. I am wandering.

As I became pregnant of my daughter, and it was thought I should die, I was for some time spared a little; for I was so extraordinarily ill the doctors had given me over. After having passed twelve years and four months in the crosses of marriage, as great as could be—except poverty, which I have never experienced, at least, that of worldly goods, though I have much desired it—you withdrew me from them, O my God, in the manner I am about to tell, to give me heavier ones to bear, and of a nature

such as I had never experienced; for if, Sir, you pay attention to the life you have ordered me to write, you will see my crosses have constantly been increasing up to the present, as I never emerge from one but to enter on another more severe. I will say beforehand that in the great troubles I was subjected to, and when I was told I was in mortal sin, I had not a person in the world to speak to. I would have wished to have had some one as witness of my conduct; but I had none, being without any support, either confessor, director, friend, or councillor. I had lost all; and after, my God, you had deprived me of all, one after the other, you yourself also withdrew. I remained without a creature, and for crown of desolation, without you, my God, who alone could sustain me in so strange a state.

My husband's ailment became every day more obstinate. and he himself had a presentiment of death. His mind was made up for it, for the languishing life he led became every day more burdensome to him. To his other ailments was added a disgust for all kinds of nourishment, so great that he did not even take the things necessary for life. The little he took, there was no one but I had the courage to force on him. The doctors advised him to go to the country for change of air. The first few days he was there he appeared to be better, when suddenly he was seized by a colic and continued fever. I was well prepared for anything it might please Providence to ordain; for I saw some time back he could hardly live longer. His patience increased with his illness, and his illness was very crucifying for me; yet the good use he made of it softened all my troubles. I was extremely pained that my mother-in-law kept me away from his bedside as much as she could, and influenced him against me. I much feared he might die in this feeling, and it afflicted me extremely. I seized a moment, when my mother-in-law was not there, and approaching his bed, I knelt down and said to him, that if

I had done anything which had displeased him, I asked his pardon. I begged him to believe it was not voluntarily. He appeared much touched, and as if he had recovered from a profound stupor, he said to me—what he had never said before—"It is I who ask your pardon. I did not deserve you." From this time not only had he no longer a dislike to see me, but he gave me advice as to what I should do after his death, in order not to be dependent on the persons on whom I am at present. He was eight days very resigned and patient; although, owing to the gangrene which increased, they cut him up with a lancet. I sent to Paris to fetch the best surgeon, but he was dead when he arrived.

It would be impossible to die with more Christian dispositions or courage than he did, after having received all the Sacraments in an edifying manner. I was not there when he died, for he had made me withdraw, not through hostility, but through tenderness, and he was more than twenty hours unconscious at the last. I believe, O my God, that you delayed his death only for my sake, for he was entirely eaten up with gangrene, the entrails and stomach quite black, while he yet lived. You willed he should die on the eve of Magdalen's Day, in order to make me see I must be wholly yours. Every year on the Magdalen's Day I used to renew the contract I had made with you, my Lord, and I found myself free to renew it for good. I was at once enlightened that there was much mystery therein. It was the morning of the 21st of July, 1676, he died. The evening, when alone in my room in full daylight, I perceived a warm shade pass near me. The next day I went into my closet, where was the image of my dear and divine Spouse, Jesus Christ. I renewed my marriage, and I added to it a vow of chastity for a time, with a promise to make it perpetual if M. Bertot permitted me. After that a great interior joy seized me, which was the more novel to me as for a long

time I had been in bitterness. It seemed to me our Lord wished to grant me some favour. Immediately I had a very great interior certainty that at the instant our Lord delivered my husband from purgatory. I have never since doubted it for a moment; although I have tried to be diffident. Some years after, Mother Granger appeared to me in a dream, and said to me: "Rest assured that our Lord, for the love he bears you, has delivered your husband from purgatory on the Magdalen's Day. He, however, entered heaven on the day of St. James, the 25th, which was his *fête*." This surprised me, but I have since learned that there are two kinds of purgatory, one where they suffer the pain of the senses, and the other where they suffer only the privation of God; that there are persons who pass through the latter without passing through the former, others who pass through the former and go afterwards into the latter. A great servant of God revealed after her death to many of her intimates that she was three days deprived of the vision of God without any pain of the senses.

As soon as I learned my husband had expired, I said to you, "O my God, you have broken my bonds. I will offer to you a sacrifice of praise." After that I remained in a very great silence, exterior and interior; silence, however, dry and without support. I could neither weep nor speak. My mother-in-law said very beautiful things, at which every one was edified, and they were scandalized at my silence, which was put down to want of resignation. A monk told me that every one admired the beautiful behaviour of my mother-in-law; that as for me, they did not hear me say anything—that I must offer my loss to God. But it was impossible for me to say a single word, whatever effort I made. I was, besides, much prostrated, for although I had recently given birth to my daughter, I nevertheless watched my husband without leaving his room the twenty four nights he was ill. I was more

than a year in recovering from the fatigue of that. The prostration of body and the prostration of my spirit, the dryness and stupidity I was in, made me unable to speak. I, however, for some moments was in admiration at your goodness, O my God, which had set me free exactly on the day I had taken you for Spouse. I saw that crosses would not be wanting to me since my mother-in-law had survived my husband; and I could not understand your conduct, O my God, which, while setting me free, had yet more strongly bound me by giving me two children immediately before the death of my husband. This surprised me extremely, my God, that you set me at liberty only by making me captive. I have since learned that you had by your wisdom provided for me a means of being afterwards the plaything of your providence, for had I had only my eldest son, I would have placed him at college, and myself become a nun at the Benedictines. I should thereby have withdrawn myself from your designs regarding me.

I wished to mark the esteem I had for my husband by giving him the most magnificent burial that ever took place in the neighbourhood, at my own expense. I also paid out of my own money the pious legacies he wished to make. My mother-in-law strongly opposed herself to everything I could do to secure my interests. I remained without any help; for my brother was very far from espousing my cause. I had no one from whom I could openly ask counsel. I knew nothing about business; but you, O my God, who, independently of my natural intellect, have always made me fit for all that it has pleased you, gave me so perfect an intelligence of it that I succeeded. I omitted nothing, and I was astonished that in these matters I knew all without having ever learned. I arranged all my papers and settled all my affairs without the help of anybody. My husband had a quantity of papers deposited with him. I made an exact inventory for each

person with my own hand, and sent them to those to whom they belonged. This would have been very difficult for me, O my God, without your help, because, owing to the long time my husband had been ill, everything was in great disorder. This got me the reputation of a clever woman, as well as another affair which happened.

A great number of persons, who were mutually litigating for more than twenty years, applied to my husband to reconcile them. Although it was not the business of a gentleman, they entreated him because he had uprightness and a good intellect; so, as there were among those persons some he loved, he consented to it. There were twenty suits, the one against the other, and there were twenty-two persons who were litigating in this way, without any one being able to end their differences, owing to new incidents that arose every day. My husband undertook to engage advocates to examine their papers, but he died without having done anything. After his death I sent to fetch them to give back their papers; but they would not receive them, and begged me to reconcile them and prevent their ruin. It appeared to me alike ridiculous and impossible that I should undertake so serious a business, and one so long in dispute. Yet, supported by your strength, O my God, I followed the movement you gave me to consent. I shut myself up for more than thirty days in my closet on this business, without leaving it save for Mass and meals. These worthy people all blindly signed their compromise without seeing it. They were so pleased therewith they could not help publishing it everywhere. It was you alone, O my God, who did these things, for since I have no longer had either wealth or business matters, I have not even understood them, and at present when I hear people talk of them it seems to me it is Arabic.

As soon as I was a widow my friends and people of the greatest distinction in the country came to advise me to

separate at once from my mother-in-law; for, although I made no complaint of it, every one knew her temper. I answered them I had no ground to complain of her, and that I counted on remaining with her if she would allow me. It was the view you from the first gave me, O my God, not to descend from the cross, as you yourself had not descended from it. For this reason I resolved not only not to leave my mother-in-law, but even not to get rid of the maid of whom I have spoken. At the time of your greatest rigours towards me, O my Love, you prevented me from relieving myself of the exterior crosses, which, far from diminishing on the death of my husband, increased, as I shall tell in its place, after having described the interior state of troubles that I had to sustain and pass. You will excuse, Sir, if there is so little order in what I write. It is impossible for me to do otherwise, since I have to speak of so many different things to which I cannot give attention, telling them as they offer themselves.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I was in so strange a state of deprivation of all support, whether exterior or interior, that it would be difficult for me to describe it well or to make it fully understood. In order to acquit myself the best I can, I am about to describe successively the troubles through which during seven years I have passed, until it pleased you, O my God, to deliver me suddenly from them: then I will resume the thread of my narrative. I did not suddenly lose all support for the interior, but gradually, for during the lifetime of Mother Granger I had already suffered many interior troubles, but they were only like the forerunners of those I had afterwards to experience.

After you had wounded me in the profound manner I have described, you commenced, O my God, to withdraw from me, and the pain of your absence was so much the harder for me, the sweeter your presence and the more powerful your love had been in me. I complained of it to Mother Granger, and I thought I no longer loved you. One day, when keenly penetrated with this thought and this pain, I said to her that I no longer loved you, sole object of my love. Looking at me she said, "What! you no longer love God!" This word was more penetrating for me than a burning arrow. I felt so terrible a pain and such utter confusion I could not answer her, because that which was concealed in the central depth made itself at

the moment so much the more apparent as I had thought it lost.

What persuaded me, O my God, that I had lost your love was, that in place of having found new strength in this love, so strong and so penetrating, I had become more weak and more powerless. For formerly I defended myself more easily from the leaning towards the creature; and then, though I had experienced how amiable you are, and your love had even banished from my heart all other love, and my soul had been so greatly elevated above the created, she found herself less capable of defending herself from a certain inclination for the creature: I did not then know what it was to lose our own strength to enter into the strength of God. I have learned it only by a terrible and long experience. I was the more afflicted at it, as this defect appeared to me the most difficult to conquer, and that into which I entered with the greatest facility, and of which I yet had the most horror; because it fills the heart, and seems to establish its dwelling in the same place where you, my God, previously made your residence. Although this was not actually so, my pain persuaded me of it. The more dangerous this evil appeared to me the more familiar it became. It was your leading before making me enter into the state of pure abjectness, which I shall call the state of death; since I cannot doubt that you made use of it to cause me to die entirely to myself, as you had caused me to die to all the rest. For if your conducting of me is attentively considered, it will be seen that the exterior deprivations were only the figure of the interior, and that you have employed both the one and the other with equal force, insensibly augmenting them until total death, where it seems you have changed the conduct only to make me enter into a new abyss of crosses and abjection, in which you have observed an order the more admirable as it has almost always been accompanied by a double abjection: wherein you have

maintained a course of guidance as wise and extraordinary as to the eyes of men it has appeared more foolish and abject. The more I advance in what I have to write the more difficult the enterprise appears to me.

Your conducting, O my God, before making me enter into the state of death was a conduct of dying life. Sometimes hiding and leaving me to myself in a hundred weaknesses, sometimes showing yourself with more clearness and love. The more the soul approached the state of death, the more long and tedious became her abandonments, and her weaknesses greater, and her enjoyments shorter, but more pure and more inward, until at last she fell into the total privation. It was an overthrow alike of the exterior and the interior. It seemed, my Love, your exterior providence and your interior guidance had challenged each other as to which would the sooner destroy her.

In proportion as sensibility had increased your absence became more continual; the abandonments more utter; weaknesses greater; exterior crosses more bitter; powerlessness to do good more decided; inclination to all evil insurmountable. I had the sentiments of all sins, without, however, committing them; and these sentiments in my mind passed for realities, because I felt my heart occupied with the creature. At last things came to such a point that I lost for ever both every support and every prop, as well interior as exterior. Nothing of you, O my God, any longer remained to me but grief at your loss, which appeared to me real. Then I lost this grief in order to enter into the cold of death. There remained to me only a certainty of my loss, O my God, and of never loving you.

As soon as I saw the happiness of a state, or its beauty, or the necessity of a virtue, it seemed to me I incessantly fell into the contrary vice, as if that view—which, although very short, was always accompanied with love—had been given to me only to make me experience its opposite, in a

manner the more terrible as I had preserved more horror of it. It was indeed then, O my God, I did the evil that I hated, and I did not do the good that I loved. There was given me a penetrating view of the purity of God, and I became still more impure as far as the sentiment; for as to the reality, this state is very purifying, but I was then very far from understanding it. It was shown me that uprightness and simplicity of heart were the essential virtue, and I did nothing but lie, without wishing it. I then thought they were lies, but, in truth, it was only pure mistake and hasty words without any reflection. I gave way to hastiness. I had never had anything but scorn for wealth. I felt attachments to it, and I would have liked to have back what I had lost; so it seemed to me. I could not control my words, nor hinder myself from eating what was to my taste. All my appetites awoke again, with an entire impotence to conquer them. Their revival, however, was only in appearance, for, as I have said, as soon as I ate things for which I felt so violent a desire, I lost the taste for them.

M. Bertot, without knowing my state, forbade austerities, which might have only served me for support. He told me I was unworthy of practising them. I then believed, O my God, that you had made known to him my wicked state. I could no longer suffer anything, as it appeared to me—although I was quite surrounded by sufferings—owing to the extreme repugnance I felt to it. I entered into so strange a desolation that it is inexplicable, the weight of the anger of God was continual upon me. I used to lie on a rug, which was upon the landing, and cry with all my strength—when I could not be heard—in the sentiment I had of sin, and the inclination I believed I had to commit it, "Damn me, that I may not sin! You send others to hell through justice, give it to me through mercy." It seemed to me I would gladly cast myself into it in the apprehension I had of sin.

M. Bertot, on the reports made to him that I practised great austerities—for people imagined it, owing to the extreme trouble I was in, which made me unrecognizable —though he had forbidden them to me, thought that I followed my own course. In this deplorable state, I could not tell him anything of myself, God not permitting it; for although I had such keen pains from sin, when I wished to write or speak of them, I found nothing, and I was quite stupid. Even when I wished to confess, I could not say anything, except that I had a sensibility for the creature. This sensibility was such that, during the whole time it lasted, it never caused me any emotion or temptation in the flesh. M. Bertot gave me up, and sent me word I should take another director. I no longer doubted God had made known to him my wicked state, and that this abandonment was the surest mark of my reprobation.

I continued so afflicted, I thought I should die of grief. I was pregnant of my daughter. I have often been astonished that I was not confined prematurely. My sobs were so violent I was on the point of suffocating. I should have been consoled at M. Bertot's abandonment if it was not that I regarded it as the visible mark of God's abandonment. My pain was so keen at the commencement I could hardly eat. People did not understand what I lived on, and I don't understand it myself. I was so weak that in my confinement I was ill from Monday midday up to Tuesday midnight. The doctors found no strength in me, and said I should die of pure weakness without delivery. Fear lest the child should be unbaptised made me make a vow to the Holy Virgin, after which I was happily delivered, though I had been so miserable and at the point of death. I had no unwillingness to die, because I thought my death would end my interior ills.

It was as much as I could do at this time to drag my body, so prostrated was I with languor, for I suffered then

the privation of all blessings, and the accumulation of all evils, without anything whatsoever in heaven or on earth giving me any consolation. All was hostile to me, all crucified me. Besides, I had to be the whole day under a perpetual opposition, bearing within inconceivable torments. If I could have been alone, my pain would have been much relieved, but I had only the night to mourn and weep my grief. As I dwelt alone in an isolated apartment, I gave free course to my tears, and sometimes I said with the prophet, "I wash my bed with my tears, and my groanings are like the sound of great waters." Nothing whatever was given me to relieve me, for prayer was a torture. I could not read anything. If I could force myself to do it, I knew not what I was reading, and understood nothing whatever. I recommenced, I know not how often, my reading, and I understood less the last time than the first; all I retained was a horrible disgust for it. Sermons and all pious exercises had the same effect on me. My imagination was in a frightful irregularity, and gave me no rest. I could not speak of you, O my God, for I became quite stupid, nor even take in what others said when I heard them speaking.

In place of that peace of paradise in which my soul had been, as it were, confirmed and established, there was only a trouble of hell. I could sleep but a short time continuously; my trouble woke me up, as if from my bed I was bound to enter hell: for that inclination to be damned rather than to sin, which was still a good thing, was taken from me. I fell into a greater weakness. The fear of death and of hell seized me. I sought my first disposition, and I did not find it; on the contrary, it seemed that sin was more familiar to me, that I would have liked to commit it. I found myself hard towards God, insensible to his bounties. There was not shown me any good that I had done in all my life. The good appeared to me evil, and what is frightful is that this state

appeared to me bound to endure eternally, while I did not believe it to be a state, but a true fall; for if I could have believed it had been a state, or that it had been necessary, or agreeable to God, I should not have had any pain from it. From that I entered into insensibility, which appeared to me the consummation of my woes; it was also the last dying state. But before speaking of it I must continue my narrative. I will ask you to consider what it means to bear this state seven years, and especially five years without an instant of consolation, and accompanied with all the crosses I have described and those I am about to tell.

CHAPTER XXIV.

As soon as I was a widow my crosses, which one would have thought should have diminished, increased. That domestic, whom I have spoken of, who ought to have been more gentle because she depended on me, became more violent. She had accumulated a great deal at the house, and I secured her a pension for the rest of her life, after the death of my husband, in consequence of the services she had rendered him. All this seemed bound to soften her; but quite the contrary happened. She was puffed up with vanity. The necessity of constantly watching an invalid had led her on to drink pure wine to keep up her strength; now as she became aged and feeble, the least thing went to her head. That became a habit with her. I endeavoured to conceal this defect, but it became so strong it was impossible to put up with her. I spoke of it to her confessor, in order he might endeavour judiciously to correct it; but in place of profiting by the advice of her director, she became furious, and there was no violence she did not exhibit towards me. My mother-in-law, who up to that had had great trouble to endure this defect in the woman, and who had even spoken to me of it, joined her in blaming me and excusing her. It was, who would cause me the most trouble. If company came, she cried with all her strength, I had dishonoured her; that I had driven her to despair; that I was damning myself, and would be the

cause of her damnation. You gave me, O my God, despite the deplorable state I was interiorly in, a boundless patience towards her. I answered all her furies only with charity and gentleness, giving her even every mark of my affection. If any other maid came to serve me, she sent her away with fury, and reproached me that I hated her because she had faithfully served my husband: so that I had to make up my mind to be my own servant when it did not please her to come; and when she came, it was to cry and scold. These ways of acting, and many others, which it would be too long to tell, lasted up to a year before my departure. I had, besides, very severe and very frequent illnesses; and when I was ill this woman was in despair. I have always, therefore, thought you had caused all this only for me, O my Lord; for without a special permission she was not capable of such strange conduct. She did not even recognize faults so glaring, always believing she was in the right. All the persons you have used to make me suffer thought they did you service.

I went to Paris expressly to see M. Bertot. The urgent prayers I had caused to be made to him to direct me, joined to the death of my husband, at which he thought I should be very much afflicted, obliged him to conduct me anew. But it was very little use to me; for besides that I could not tell him anything of myself, or make myself known to him, because every idea was taken from me, even that of my wretchedness, when I spoke to him, your providence, O my God, permitted that when I was eager to see him from the extreme need I thought I had of him, it was then that I could not see him. I went twelve or fifteen times to see him without being able to speak to him. In the space of two months I spoke to him only twice, and then for a short time, of what appeared to me most essential. I told him the need I had of an ecclesiastic to educate my son, and to remove his bad habits and the unfavourable impressions he had been inspired with against me. These

reached such a point that when he spoke of me he never called me "my mother," but, "She has said;" "She has done." M. Bertot found me a priest, who was a very good man, and who had been very well recommended to him.

I went to make a retreat with M. Bertot and Madame de C—— at P——. God permitted that at the most he spoke to me less than ten minutes. When he saw I said nothing to him, and knew not what to say—and, besides, I never told him of the graces our Lord had bestowed on me (not through a desire of concealing them, but because you did not permit it, O my God)—he spoke to the souls that he thought more advanced in grace, and left me as a person with whom he had almost nothing to do. You concealed from him so well, O my God, the state of my soul, in order to make me suffer, that he wished to put me back into the considerations, thinking that I did not use prayer, and that Mother Granger was mistaken when she told him that I did. He even thought she had not had the gift of discernment, as he let me know. I did what I could to obey him, but it was entirely impossible for me. I was vexed with myself for it, because I rather believed M. Bertot than all my experiences. During my whole retreat, whatever efforts I made, not a thought came to my mind. My inclination, which I discerned only through the resistance I opposed to it, was to remain in silence and nakedness; and I thought I was obedient in so remaining. This made me still more believe I was fallen from my grace. I kept myself in my nothingness, content with my low degree of prayer, without envying that of others, of which I deemed myself unworthy. I, however, would have desired to do your will, O my God, and to advance in order to please you, but I utterly despaired it could ever be; and as I did not doubt it was through my fault I had lost my gift of prayer, I was content to remain in my lowness. I was yet, nevertheless, almost continually in prayer during this retreat; but I did not know it, and nothing was said to

me that could lead me to think I was so: on the contrary, the lady who had led me into the retreat said to me that I appeared not so much defective as little advanced; and as she was reading a collection of the letters of M. Bertot, I recognized one he had formerly written to me on my state. I told her it was to me, but she would not believe me, asserting the contrary. The most spiritual writings were concealed from me, and I was told to apply myself to meditation; but it was impossible for me. O my God, how admirable was your providence to sink me in every way. Without this procedure I should still have subsisted in something.

In the place where I dwelt there was a person whose doctrine was suspected of [Jansenism?] He possessed a rank in the Church which obliged me to show a deference to him. As he learned at once the opposition I had for all persons suspected, and he was satisfied I had some credit in the place, he used all his efforts to win me over to his opinions. I spoke to him with so much force that he could give me no answer. This only increased the desire he had of winning me, and forming friendship with me. For two years and a half he continued to urge me. As he had a very amiable temper, much cleverness, and was very civil, I had no distrust of him, and because I felt a great interior strength, and that while speaking to him God was very present to me, I thought it was an infallible mark God approved my seeing him. During the two and a half years I was obliged to see him, I felt very great troubles, for, on the one hand, I was led, as it were, in spite of myself, to see him and to speak to him; and on the other, there were many things in him I could not approve, and for which I felt an extreme repugnance. God appeared irritated with me because I often, through faithlessness, followed the natural inclination I had to converse with him, although ordinarily it was only on good things, or at most, indifferent. But as I felt that my natural disposition led to

these conversations, I saw the imperfection there was in following it. I often kept away from him, but he came to ask me why I was no longer visible, and so managed with his attentions to my sick husband, that I could not avoid his conversations. I thought the shortest way was to break once for all, but M. Bertot would not permit me until after the death of my husband; then, seeing at last the hostility he had to the spiritual life, and that I could not gain anything over his mind, I broke the connection I had with him. When he saw he could not renew it, he caused me strange persecutions, stirring up all those of his party. These persons had at that time among them a method such, that in a very short time they knew those who were on their side, and those who were opposed to them. They sent circular letters to the nearest, which they passed on, the one to the other, so that in a very short time these persons decried me everywhere in the strangest manner. My name was known to them, but not the person. They loudly condemned my piety. They circulated secret reports to discredit me in all the places they knew I was held in repute. However, the joy I had at seeing myself freed from this connection was so great that I little felt what he could do to me. I enjoyed so greatly my new liberty that my trouble was counted for almost nothing. I said to myself, "I will never connect myself with any one, and I will maintain such a reserve I shall never more be at the trouble of breaking." Fool that I was! I did not know that he who had freed me could alone hinder me from connecting myself. I still thought to be able to defend and guard myself, and my dismal experience had not yet perfectly convinced me of my powerlessness; for I fell again into a new connection, which lasted six months, but it did not cause me so much trouble, because this person was more devoted to God. The person with whom I had broken decried me then everywhere, which slightly injured my reputation. It was, O my God, the thing I most held

to, and which cost me most to lose in the sequel. As I knew that people spoke of me, I watched myself with all my strength; but the blow was given, it had to take its course.

What I suffered was terrible, for the estrangement of my God was still greater. All creatures joined with you, O my God, to make me suffer; and I had such an impression it seemed to me they were avenging the outrages I had done to their Creator. I had neither relative, friend, nor confidante. It appeared to me every one was ashamed of me. I further bore a state of inexplicable humiliation; for the powerlessness in which I was of performing exterior acts of charity that I used to do, such as going to the holy Sacrament, burying the dead, remaining a long time at church, served as pretext to that person to condemn me. When he saw I no longer performed all these practices, he proclaimed it was through his means I had done them, and when I no longer saw him I had given up everything. He wished to attribute to himself the merit of what you made me do, O my God, by your grace alone. He went so far as publicly to preach of me as a person, who, after being an example for a town, had become its scandal. He, many times, preached hurtful things; and although I was present at his sermons, which were such as to overwhelm me with confusion (for they scandalized all who heard them), I could not feel pained: on the contrary, I rejoiced at them, for in my central depth I bore a condemnation against myself that I cannot express, and it appeared to me that this person, by the public confusion he procured me, repaired the faults and the infidelities I had committed. It seemed to me I deserved infinitely more, and if all men had known me, they would have trampled me underfoot. My reputation then suffered more and more by means of this person, and I inwardly suffered a greater confusion than if I had committed all possible evils. It was, who would cause me most insults. He turned against me all

those who passed for being pious, after which he said, "You see, she has no one for her. So and so, who are saints, are all against her." I thought they were right in behaving thus. I did nothing whatever either to regain their esteem, or to show I was troubled at having lost it. On the contrary, I kept myself aloof and confused as a criminal who dares not lift his eyes. I was sunk before you, my God, in the deepest depth of abjectness. I regarded the virtue of others with respect, and saw the world without defect, and myself without any virtue. But although I thought myself so remote from the good I saw in others, I yet dared not, nor even could, desire their state. I deemed myself unworthy of all the graces of God, which I believed I had lost for ever through my unfaithfulness. I was content, O my God, to see you served by others, being unable to do it myself. I entertained respect for all those who served you, and beside them I felt myself smaller than anything. When through chance any one praised me, I felt a weight that plunged me back into my nothingness, and I said to myself, "They do not know my abjectness," and I blushed deeply. I sometimes used to say, "Oh, if people could understand from whence I am fallen!" When they blamed me I saw they were right. Nature, indeed, would have liked sometimes to have escaped such strange abjection, but there was no means, and if I endeavoured to exhibit an exterior righteousness by the practice of some good, my heart secretly gave the lie to my action; I saw it was hypocrisy to appear what I was not; and you, O my God, did not permit it to succeed. Oh, how beautiful are the crosses of providence! All others are not crosses. That which I then bore from the weight of my abjectness, was far more terrible to me than all others. If I had not believed myself guilty, I would have taken credit for my pains, but I felt so filthy I was a horror to myself.

I was often very ill, and in danger of death. I knew not

what to do to prepare for death. I did not even see what I could do, and I let myself be devoured by grief. I hardly dared show myself, owing to my trouble. It seemed to me every one must know my abjectness, and the state from which I believed I had fallen. Even the pleasure of drinking my confusion was taken from me; there remained to me only the confusion itself, which I could no longer bear: for I did not feel, in myself, the least inclination to good, but, on the contrary, a tendency to every evil, and this involuntary tendency, without any effect, appeared to me a crime. God so permitted it. I deemed myself more filthy and ugly than the Devil, and yet at confession I knew not what to tell, except certain infidelities I committed, and that I felt natural sensibilities. For, as I have said, I did nothing marked. It was an experience of abjectness, and an inconceivable sentiment of my paltriness, which made me treat the sentiments of the heart as sins. I did not believe there was in the world a more wicked person than myself, and I suffered such confusion, I dared not show myself. People of piety, who had known me, wrote to me as if they had believed what those persons said, and I did not justify myself, though I was innocent of what they accused me. One day that I was more desolate than usual, and there was nothing on earth capable of consoling me—being, as it were, beside myself from the excess of the trouble, which deprived me of food and sleep—I opened the New Testament without thinking what I was doing. I found these words: "Virtue is made perfect in weakness; My grace is sufficient for thee." This consoled me for some moments, but the consolation passed away in an instant, and served only to render the pain more severe, for there remained to me neither idea nor trace of these things.

CHAPTER XXV.

You took from me, O my God, suddenly, all the sensibility I had for the creature, and you took it from me in an instant, as when one puts off a dress; so that from this time I have never had it for any one whatever. Although you had shown me this grace (for which I could not sufficiently mark my gratitude), I was yet thereby neither more reassured, nor more happy, nor less confused. You were so far from me, O my God, and you appeared so angry, that there remained to me only the grief of having lost you, through my fault. The loss of my reputation, by means of the party of that person, increased each day, and became more sensible to my mind and to my heart, although it was not permitted me to justify myself, or complain. As I became still more powerless for all sorts of external works, and I could neither go to see the poor, nor remain at church, nor use prayer; and the more cold towards God, the more sensible I was to my ills—all this destroyed me more in my own eyes, and in the eyes of others. There were, however, suitors of high position, who sought me in marriage, persons who, according to ordinary rules, ought not to think of me. They presented themselves even at the height of my exterior and interior desolation, and it appeared to me it was a means of saving myself from the vexation I was exposed to. But it seemed to me then, in spite of all my troubles, that had a king presented himself, I would

have gladly refused him, to make you know, O my God, that, with all my paltriness, I wished to be yours alone, and that if you did not want me, I should at least have the consolation of having been faithful to you in everything which depended on me. For as to the state I bore, it in no way depended on me, and if I could have got rid of it, I would have done so, at least during some time; since afterwards I endured it sometimes through resignation, at other times from despair of ever emerging from it—despair caused by the impotence in which I found myself. I never spoke of being asked in marriage, nor of the persons who asked me, although I well knew my mother-in-law used to say that there were no proposals, and that if I did not marry it was because I did not get the chance. It was enough for me, O my God, that you knew what I sacrificed for you, without telling it; especially one, whose high birth, joined to all external qualities, might have tempted my vanity, and my inclination. Yet, O my God, the more cruel you were to me, the more eager was I to make sacrifices to you. If in the sacrifices, and the terrible crosses, in which I was plunged, both from without and within, I could have hoped, O my Lord, to be pleasing to you, the hell I then endured would have been changed into paradise; but, alas! I was far from presuming, or hoping it. It seemed to me that a sea of affliction would be followed only by an eternal torment, O my God. I had even to submit to have lost you for ever—you, who alone could end my woes, which all creatures could only render more gnawing. I dared not desire to enjoy you, O my God, but I desired only not to offend you.

I was five or six weeks at the point of death. I often thought I should die from weakness, caused by a continual diarrhœa, which had reduced me to such a state that I could not endure any nourishment. A spoonful of broth threw me into a faint; my voice was so weak that, however near my mouth the ear was placed, they could not

distinguish my words. My dispositions were, that, in the extreme wretchedness to which I was reduced, I found nothing that could assure my salvation; on the contrary, my loss appeared inevitable. Yet I could not be unwilling to die, as I had a strong impression the longer I lived, the more I should sin, and that I could no longer avoid sin; that I would live only to commit it. Hell appeared to me more agreeable, and in my grief I cried out, "Hell, and not sin!" My other disposition was that, far from seeing any good in me, I saw only evil. All the good you had caused me to do in my life, O my God, was shown to me as evil. All appeared to me full of defects; my charities, my alms, my prayers, my penances, all rose up against me, and appeared to me objects of condemnation. I found on your side, O my God, on my own, on that of all creatures, a general condemnation. My conscience was a witness I could not appease, and what would appear most strange, is, that the sins of my youth did not then cause me any pain. It was not they bore witness against me; it was a universal witness in all the good I had done, and in all the sentiments of evil; yet although the condemnation was so complete, I did not see anything in particular which I could mention, or of which I could accuse myself. As a consequence, I did not find any remedy for my ills in confession, and though I reiterated it according to my strength, I could tell nothing except of having been unfaithful to you, O my God. What I saw was inexplicable to me, and though I should have been able to explain it, my confessor would have understood nothing. He would have regarded as very great good and eminent virtue what your pure eyes rejected as unfaithfulness. It was indeed then, O most amiable Judge, while yet most rigorous—it was indeed then I understood what you say, that you will judge our righteousness. It was not my unrighteousnesses you judged, since they did not even appear in this judgment; it was all righteousnesses, but

righteousnesses abominable in your eyes, as it appeared to me. Ah! how pure you are! how chaste you are! Who will understand it? It was indeed then I turned my eyes on all sides to see whence help should come to me; but my help could only come from him who has made the heaven and the earth. When I saw there was no salvation for me in myself, I entered into a secret complaisance at not seeing in myself any good, on which to rest and assure my salvation. The nearer my ruin appeared, the more I found in God himself—all irritated as he appeared to me —something to increase my confidence. It seemed to me that I had in Jesus Christ all that was wanting to me in myself. I was, O divine Jesus, that lost sheep of the House of Israel that you were come to save. You were truly the Saviour of her who could find no salvation out of you. O men, strong and holy, find salvation as much as you please in what you have done, that is holy and glorious for God; as for me, I make my boast only in my weaknesses, since they have earned for me such a Saviour.

I rejoiced that this body of sin was soon to be decayed and destroyed. The return of my health brought no change in my trouble or my abjectness; but as I did not find anything specially marked, I begged the worthy priest who lived in our house to notice my defects and inform me of them. He did it with much charity, but this served only to increase my grief; for besides seeing myself utterly powerless to get rid of them, what he said was so insupportable to me that I did violence to myself not to let it be seen, and I held my head in the severity of my pain. At other times, as if I had been mad, I pressed it against the wall, and I told him not to say anything more; for I was distracted, and fell, as it were, into despair, owing to my impotence. He said he would no longer tell them to me; but it was not this I wished. He was not in a state to understand my trouble. I so despised and even hated myself that all the torments I suffered from the loss of

God, of creatures and of myself, seemed to me sweet. I saw others honour God in their way; I saw them like angels and myself like a devil. The Communion, which I had once so much desired, became for me a new subject of apprehension and of grief; when through obedience I was obliged to approach it, it all made me shudder. I would not have wished, O my Saviour, to abuse your body, and I was not allowed to abstain, though I believed I was really abusing it; I no longer had anything but disgust for a food which had been my dearest delight. This state lasted with me five years with the same severity, accompanied by continual crosses, as I have mentioned, and very frequent illness. There were besides that two years when my ills were not so extreme, though great. All these ills, joined to the loss of my reputation, which I believed greater than it was—all this, I say, was sometimes so trying, with the inability to eat, that I knew not how I could live. In four days I did not eat enough for a single moderate meal. I was obliged to take to bed from pure weakness; my body could no longer bear so rude a burden. I would have liked to have been allowed to tell my sins to all the world. If I had believed, known, or heard, that it was a state, I should have been too happy; but I saw my pain as sin. Spiritual books, when I forced myself to read them, increased my trouble, for I did not see in myself those degrees which they mention. I did not even understand them, and when they spoke of the troubles of certain states, I was far from applying them to myself; I said, "These persons feel the pains that God operates, and as for me, I commit sin, and feel only my wicked state." What consoled me for some moments without consoling me, was, that you were not thereby less great, my God. I would have liked to separate the sin from the confusion of sin, and, provided I had not offended you, all would have been easy for me.

Here is a little sketch of my last wretchedness, which I

am very pleased to make known to you, because I have therein committed many infidelities at the commencement, having yielded to the selfhood, to vain complaisance, long conversations really useless, although self-love and nature made them look in a way necessary; but at the end, I would not have endured a word too human, nor the least thing. You purified in me, my God, and my Divine Love, the real evil through an apparent evil. Could I not indeed sing with the Church, "Oh, happy guilt, which has earned for me such a Redeemer!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

The first monk whom you had used, O my God, to draw me to you, to whom I used to write at his own request, in the very depth of my desolation, wrote to me to cease writing to him; that he had nothing but repugnance for everything that came from me; that I greatly displeased you. O my God, you doubtless inspired him to write thus to me, in order that my desolation might be complete, and no hope might remain for me. A Jesuit Father, who had much esteemed me, wrote me something similar. I had not the least thought of justifying myself. I thanked them for their charity, and recommended myself to their prayers. I was at this time so indifferent to being universally condemned, and by the greatest saints, that I had no pain at it; for I gradually ceased to feel the loss of my reputation. Towards the end I would have liked everybody to have known me as I knew myself. The pain of displeasing you, O my God, without being able to remedy it, was too keen for me to feel the other crosses, although the domestic ones became daily more severe. The recollection of the time I had lost in talking and writing; infidelities I had committed; the strong impulse I felt in me to every kind of defect, was a far more sensible pain.

From the commencement you had accustomed me to dryness and privation. I even preferred it to abundance, because I knew it made me seek you above everything. I

had even from the very commencement an instinct in my inmost depth to pass beyond everything, and to leave the gifts in order to run to the Giver; but at this time there was no longer question of that, nor even of losing you, for I no more wished to possess you in myself, having abused you. I could not accustom myself to sin; for at this time I had the mind and senses so struck through your permission, who wished to destroy me without mercy, that the further I advanced, the more everything appeared sin to me: even the crosses appeared to me no longer crosses, but real faults. I thought I brought them on myself through imprudences. I was like those who, looking through a coloured glass, see everything the same colour as it. My illnesses became for me times of the greatest impotence and desolation. If I could have performed some exterior good, or some penances, this would have assured me; but besides that I had been forbidden, I feared them so much, and found such weakness in myself, that it seemed to me it was impossible to do them. I looked on them with horror, and in this matter I found myself as weak as I had been strong. It has been the same on every subject.

It seems to me I omit many things, both the providences of God towards me and the rough paths he made me traverse; but as I have only a general view, I leave them in the knowledge of God alone. Afterwards, the abandonment of my director, and the coolness I remarked in persons he conducted, no longer caused me pain, owing to the humiliation I felt within. My brother also joined himself to those who decried me, although he would not previously have looked at them. I believe, my Lord, it was you alone who brought things to this state; for he has virtue, and he surely believed he was doing good in behaving so. I was compelled by some business to go into a town where there are near relatives of my mother-in-law. When I had been there previously there was no civility I had not received from them, each vying with the other to entertain

me. They treated me now with the utmost scorn, saying they thereby avenged the suffering I caused their relative.

When I saw the thing went so far, and that, despite my efforts, I had not been able to succeed in pleasing her, I resolved to have an explanation with her. I told her every one said I ill-treated her and made her suffer, although I laboured for nothing else but to give her marks of my respect; that if it was so I begged her to consent to my withdrawing, as I had no intention of living with her in order to cause her trouble; that I lived there only to please her; that having the aversion she knew I had for the place where I dwelt, she could well believe I remained there only out of regard for her; that if I was burdensome to her I would withdraw. She answered me very coldly: I might do what I pleased; that she had not spoken of it; but that she was resolved to keep house separately. This was to give me my dismissal. I thought of taking measures secretly to withdraw. As since my widowhood I paid no visits but those of pure necessity or charity, there were only too many dissatisfied persons who formed a party against me with her. I stood alone, for you did not then permit me, O my God, to open myself to any one; and you exacted of me an inviolable secrecy on all my troubles, exterior and interior. There is not anything which costs so much, nor which so effectually kills nature; it dies at finding neither support nor consolation. As I could have no help from M. Bertot, who was very far away from Paris—who even would not have given it to me had he been nearer, or would not have given it in time, I knew not what to do. In short, I saw myself obliged to turn out in the depth of winter with the children and my daughter's nurse, without knowing what would become of us. It was Advent. There was no house vacant in the town. The Benedictines offered me an apartment with them. I suffered inconceivable torture. On the one hand, I feared by withdrawing to withdraw from the cross; on the other, it did not seem

right to remain with a person to crucify her, when I had no other desire than to please her. Yet, however careful I was, everything turned out equally ill. She complained I did things without consulting her; and when I consulted her, she would not answer me. When I asked her advice, she said I could do nothing myself; that at her age she was obliged to have the charge of everything. If I endeavoured to forestall her inclinations, doing things as I believed she would have herself advised, she told me I despised her; that young persons had nothing but contempt for the aged; that they thought they knew everything better. When I went into the country for rest, she complained of it, saying I left her alone. If I begged her to come there, she would not. If I said I did not venture to ask her to come for fear of inconveniencing her and making her sleep away from home, she complained I did not wish her to come, and I went there only to escape from her. When I learned she was vexed at my being in the country, I returned to the town, and she could not endure me nor speak to me. None the less I conversed with her; for at that time, O my God, you gave me the grace of going counter to all my dislikes, though I did not know it. I conversed with her without appearing to see how she behaved. She did not answer me, and turned to the other side. I often sent her my carriage, and begged her to come and pass a day in the country; that it would amuse without inconveniencing her, since, being so near, she could return in the evening. She sent it back empty without an answer; and if I was some days without sending it to her, there were complaints. In short, all I did to please her, embittered her, God so permitting it. She had a very good heart, but her temper was perhaps there in spite of her, and I nevertheless have much obligation to her.

My affliction was very great, for I felt almost always repugnance to do what I did, and as I did it by conquering myself, the contrariety I felt appeared to me a sin. On

Christmas Day, being with her, I said with much affection: "My mother, the King of Peace has been born this day to bring it to us. I ask of you peace in his name." I believe this touched her, though she did not let it appear. The ecclesiastic I had in the house, far from supporting and consoling me, served only to weaken and afflict me more, showing me I ought not to put up with certain things; and when in compliance I wished to introduce some order, as well in what concerned my mother-in-law as my domestics, besides being unsuccessful, it augmented my crosses and my troubles. For it is a strange thing that, no longer having a husband, when I ought to be mistress, I yet was unable to dismiss a servant, however faulty he might be. As soon as any one ought to go she took his part, and all her friends mixed themselves up in it.

When I was ready to leave, one of the friends of my mother-in-law (a good man who has always esteemed me, without daring to let it appear to her), having learned of it, was very apprehensive I might quit the town, for some of my alms passed through his hands. He thought it would be a great injury to the neighbourhood. He resolved to speak to my mother-in-law with the greatest caution he could, for he knew her. After he had spoken to her, she said that she would not turn me out of her house, but if I left it, she would offer no obstacle. He came to see me then, and begged me to go and make excuses to her, to satisfy her. I told him that I would do it a hundred times for one, although I knew not about what; that I was continually making them to her for whatever I saw vexed her; but that this was not the question, that I made no complaint against her, and that I was content to remain with her as long as it should please her; but that, being in her house, it was not right I should remain there to annoy her, that it was right I should secure her ease. I nevertheless went with him into my mother-in-law's room. I said to her that I asked her pardon, if I had displeased

her in anything, that it had never been my intention; that I begged her to tell me, in the presence of this gentleman, who was her friend, in what I might have caused her vexation, and if I had ever done anything designedly to offend her. You permitted, O my God, that she herself declared the truth in the presence of this man. She said she was not a person to allow herself to be offended, she would not have put up with it; that she had no other complaint against me except that I did not love her, and that I would have wished her dead. I answered her, these thoughts were very far from my sentiments, and that, instead of ever having this thought, I would have wished with all my heart to have prolonged her life by my attentions to her; that my affection was entire, but that she never would believe it, whatever proof I tried to give her, as long as she listened to persons who spoke to her to my disadvantage; that she even had a servant who, far from showing respect to me, ill-treated me to such a degree that she would push me when she wished to pass—she had even done it in church, making me get out of her way with as much violence as scorn, and many times in the room even insulting me with words; that I had never complained of her, but that I was glad to let her know it, because a spirit of that stamp might give her trouble some day, and put into her mind things that would torment her.

She took the part of her servant; yet we kissed each other, and it rested there. But you, O my God, who were the more watchful over me the more you appeared to forget me, permitted that, after I had gone to the country, this maid, having no longer me to vent her vexation on, behaved so ill to her mistress that she was obliged to dismiss her before my return. I must mention here that the behaviour of my mother-in-law was rather God's conducting of me than a defect on her part; for she had virtue and intelligence, and, putting aside certain failings, which people who do not use prayer keep ignorant of, she had

good qualities. Perhaps I have caused her crosses without intending it. She has caused them to me, perhaps, without knowing it, for the dislike she had for my manners might have been a severe cross to her. I hope this will not be seen by any one who might be scandalized at it, and who is not in a state to see things in God. One of the penitents of that person whom I have mentioned, who had caused me trouble because I had broken with him, was, owing to her husband's affairs, obliged to quit the country. That person was himself accused of the very same things of which he had accused me, and of others much more serious, and with much greater notoriety. You gave me the grace, O my God, although I knew the things he was accused of, never to speak of them, and when people spoke to me I defended him; and you so well restrained my heart that it never gave way to the vain joy of seeing him overwhelmed with the ill he had procured for me. And although I knew my mother-in-law was acquainted with it all, I never spoke to her on the subject, for fear of pleasing nature and nourishing its life; and when she spoke to me of it and of the confusion he had occasioned in another family, I did not seize the opportunity to show her the wrong he had done me. I simply answered her a few words without blaming him; for it is true, my God, that you have willed such a silence about my crosses for more than sixteen years, that it would be difficult to find anything more complete.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ONE day, overwhelmed with troubles, and knowing not what to do, it occurred to me to speak to a man of merit and distinction, who often came to the neighbourhood, and who is reputed very spiritual. I wrote him a note to fix a time, as I had need of his advice. As soon as I was before the Holy Sacrament I felt a terrible pain. "What!" (it was reproached me), "thou seekest to console thyself and to shake off my yoke." My husband was then living. I sent as quickly as possible another note to beg him to excuse me, and as I believed him spiritual, I said to myself, "If he is spiritual, he will not be offended; if he is not so, I should be sorry to speak to him." I told him that it had only been from self-love I had desired this conversation, and not from a true necessity; that, as I knew he understood what it was to be faithful to God, I had thought he would not be displeased that I used this Christian simplicity with him. He, however, was hurt; and this surprised me the more as I had conceived great ideas of his virtue. He certainly has it, but they are living virtues, which are ignorant even of the paths of death. You have been, O my God, my faithful conductor even in my abjectness, as I have discovered with wonder when it was past. Everlasting praise to you, O my God! I am obliged to render this testimony to your goodness, that you have made me do right by a gentle necessity, and on my side I have paid

your bounties only with ingratitude, and I have responded to them only by continual infidelities. How often at sight of your mercies to me have I said that if I was damned, a new hell must be made for me—the hell of the devils being too mild to punish so much ingratitude.

Before continuing my narrative, I must make a remark, that our Lord has suggested to me, on the way by which it has pleased his goodness to conduct me, which is, that in proportion to its obscurity is it more sure; because, leaving the soul no support, she was, in spite of herself, constrained to lose herself. What I have also noticed is, that the soul, although she may not be especially applied to any of the states of Jesus Christ, yet finds herself on emerging from her mire clothed with all the inclinations of Jesus Christ, without having paid any attention to it, and this state communicates to her Jesus Christ himself and his divine states; this is truly to be clothed with Jesus Christ. This soul, previously so impure and self-centred, is here purified like gold in the crucible. This person, full of his judgment and his will, finds himself without resistance, and is obedient to a child. He cannot even find any will in himself. His mind unresistingly puts aside his own thoughts to receive those of others; formerly he would have disputed over a matter of indifference, afterwards he yields at once, not with difficulty, as formerly, or through the practice of virtue, but as if quite naturally. His own views are dissipated of themselves as soon as those of others appear. This creature, formerly so vain, afterwards loves only littleness, poverty, and abjectness. He was formerly a self-worshipper; now he forgets himself incessantly. He used to prefer himself to everybody, and he prefers everybody to himself. At the commencement this is done in a manner perceived and by opposing self, afterwards it appears as quite acquired and without difficulty. In the state of humiliation, of which I have just spoken, everything appears lost. When

this state is passed, everything is found in the soul; but in a manner so easy and so natural that it is not discovered until it is necessary to see it. She has also an immense charity for her neighbour, and to endure his defects and weaknesses, which formerly she could only do with extreme difficulty; for one has, through lack of light, a bitter zeal against the defects of one's neighbour. The most defective persons are now become lovable to her; that anger of the wolf is changed into the gentleness of the lamb. At the commencement I loved practices of humiliation, and to do the lowest things, such as to sweep, and when I went to see the poor, to make their bed and do house-work. When I went into the convent I used to wash the plates. I performed penances in public like others, but afterwards I forgot all this, and it did not occur to me to ask for them or perform them. When I was told, I did it with joy, but of myself I took no thought of anything.

During the time of my experience of abjectness, I sought no outward recreations. On the contrary, they were disagreeable to me, and I wished not to see or to know anything. When the others went to see anything, I remained at home. My closet was my sole diversion. I found myself near the Queen, whom I had not seen, and whom I would have well enough liked to see, as well as Monseigneur, who was also there. I had only to open my eyes, and I did not do it. I loved to hear singing, yet I was once four days with a person who was reputed to have the most beautiful voice without asking her to sing; which astonished her, because she was not ignorant, that knowing her name, I must know the beauty of her voice. I have, nevertheless, committed striking infidelities in informing myself of what others said of me in blame. There was a person who told me everything, and though I said nothing in reply, and it served only to crucify me, I saw very well self-love and nature made me ask it. I could

not express the number of my paltrinesses, but they are so greatly surmounted by your bounties, O my God, and so lost in them that I can no longer see them. One of the things that caused me the greatest trouble in the seven years I have mentioned, especially the last five, was a strange folly of my imagination that gave me no repose; my senses kept it company, so that I could no longer shut my eyes in church, and thus, all the gates being opened, I had to look upon myself as a vine exposed to pillage, because the hedges that the husbandman had planted were torn down. I then saw all that was done, and all who came and went in the church—a state very different from the other. The same power that had drawn me inwards to concentrate me, seemed to push me outwards to dissipate me.

Overwhelmed then with abjectness of all kinds, crushed with vexations, wearied under the cross, I made up my mind to finish my days in this way; no hope was left me of ever emerging from this painful state. But, however, believing I had lost for ever grace and the salvation it earns for us, I would have liked at least to do what I could for a God whom I thought I should never love, and seeing the place whence I had fallen, I would have liked to serve him from gratitude, though I deemed myself a victim destined for hell. At another time the view of such a happy state gave rise in me to certain secret desires of returning to it; but suddenly I was cast back into the depth of the abyss, whence I did not utter even a sigh, abiding for ever in the state due to unfaithful souls. I remained some time in this state, like the eternally dead who must never live again. It seems to me that this passage suited me admirably: "I am like the dead, blotted out from the heart." It seemed to me, O my God, I was for ever effaced from your heart, and from that of all creatures. Gradually my state ceased to be painful. I became even insensible to it, and my insensibility

appeared to me the final hardening of my reprobation. My coldness appeared to me a coldness of death. Such was the state of things, O my God, because you made me pass away lovingly into you, as I am about to tell.

To resume my narrative. It happened that one of my footmen wished to turn Bernabite, and I wrote of it to Father La Mothe. He told me that I must address Father La Combe, who was then Superior of the Bernabites at Tonon. This obliged me to write to him. I had always preserved a basis of respect and esteem for his grace. I was very glad of this opportunity of recommending myself to his prayers. As I could speak only of what was most real to me, I wrote him that I was fallen from the grace of my God; that I had repaid his benefits with the blackest ingratitude; in short, that I was abjectness itself and a subject deserving compassion; and that, far from having advanced towards my God, I had entirely alienated myself from him. He answered me as if he had known by a supernatural light, in spite of the frightful picture I drew of myself, that my state was one of grace. He wrote to me in this way, but I was very far from being convinced. During the time of my abjectness Geneva occurred to my mind in a manner I cannot tell. It greatly alarmed me. I said to myself, "What! for crown of desertion wouldst thou proceed to this excess of impiety, to quit the faith by an apostasy?" I believed myself capable of every evil; and the extreme hardening in which I found myself, joined to a general disgust of everything that is called good, made me utterly distrustful of myself. I said, "Should I be capable of leaving the Church, for which I would give a thousand lives? What! this faith that I would have wished to seal with my blood, would it be possible I should alienate myself from it?" It seemed to me I could hope nothing from myself, and that I had a thousand reasons to fear, after the experience I had of my weakness. However, the letter I had received from Father La Combe,

wherein he told me his present disposition, which was similar enough to that preceding my state of abjectness, had such an effect upon me because you thus willed it, O my God, that it brought peace to my mind and calm to my heart. I even found myself inwardly united to him, as to a person of great grace. Some time after this, at night, in a dream, a little deformed nun presented herself to me, who, however, appeared to me both dead and blessed. She said to me, "My sister, I come to tell you that God wishes you at Geneva." She said something more which I do not remember. I was extremely consoled, but I did not know what it meant. From the portrait of Mother Bon, which I have since seen, I have recognized it was she; and the time when I saw her corresponds with that of her death.

About eight or ten days before the Magdalen's Day, 1680, it occurred to me to write again to Father La Combe, and to beg him, if he received my letter before the Magdalen's Day, to say the Mass for me on that day. You caused, O my God, that this letter—unlike others which he received only very late, for want of messengers to fetch them on foot from Chambery—was handed to him the eve of the Magdalen's, and on the Day of the Magdalen he said the Mass for me. As he offered me to God at the first *memento*, it was said to him three times with much vehemence, "You shall both dwell in the same place." He was greatly surprised, as he had never had interior speech. I believe, O my God, that this is rather verified in respect to the interior and the identity of the crucifying circumstances to which we have alike been exposed, and in respect of yourself, O God, who are our dwelling-place, than with regard to temporal residence; for although I have been some time in the same country with him, and that your providence has furnished us with some occasions of being together, it appears to me it is much more verified by the rest, since I have the advantage as well as he of confessing Jesus Christ crucified.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was this happy Day of the Magdalen that my soul was perfectly delivered from all her troubles. She already commenced after the first letter from Father La Combe, to recover a new life, yet she was like a dead man brought back to life, not yet released from his grave-clothes; but on this day I was as if in perfect life. I found myself as much elevated above nature as I had been rigorously captive under its load. I was astonished at this new liberty, and to see returned, but with as much magnificence as purity, him whom I thought I had lost for ever. What I possessed was so simple, so immense, that I cannot express it. It was then, O my God, that I found again in you ineffably all that I had lost. You restored it to me with fresh advantages. My trouble and my pain were changed into a peace such that, the better to explain, I call it God-Peace. The peace I possessed before this time was indeed the peace of God—peace, the gift of God; but it was not God-Peace—peace which he possesses in himself, and which is found only in him.

Although my joy was extremely great, it was not then allowed me to give way to it. The recollection of my past abjectness hindered me from rejoicing, or letting nature have a part in anything whatsoever. As soon as it wished to see or taste anything, the spirit made it pass beyond all. I could not better explain the empire the spirit had

then over nature than as a famous conqueror, who might himself have been kept prisoner by the enemy he has conquered. He would with authority make him do what he pleased, and there would be in him no longer resistance. I was very far then from exalting myself, or attributing to myself anything of this new state; for my experience made me see and feel what I was. I saw, indeed, it was a change of state which would last with me some time, but I did not believe my happiness as great and as immovable as it was. If a blessing is judged by the toil that has preceded it, I leave you to judge mine by the toils I had to bear before possessing it. O Paul, you say that the toils of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is prepared for us. It is true even in this life, where I can say from actual experience, that all the toils one suffers here would not be anything compared with the happiness of possessing you in yourself in the way my soul did. One day of this happiness would be indeed the recompense with usury for many years of suffering. Although then only in its rising dawn, it was nevertheless such as I describe it. Every facility for good was restored to me far greater than before; but in a manner so free, so spontaneous, that it seemed to have become natural to me.

At the commencement this liberty had less extent, but the more I advanced, the more great the liberty became. I had occasion to see M. Bertot for some moments. I told him I believed my state much changed, without telling him the details, nor what I experienced, nor that which had preceded it. I had very little time to speak to him, and further, he was attending to something else. You, O my God, permitted that he said to me, "No," perhaps without thinking of it. I believed him, for grace made me believe what was said to me, in spite of my lights and my experiences; so that when I was told the contrary of what I thought, every other thought was banished from my mind, which remained so submissive to what was said to it that it had

not even a contrary thought or reflection. This caused me no trouble, for every state was indifferent to me. Every day, however, I felt increasing within me a species of beatitude. I was entirely delivered from all pain, and from all tendencies I thought I had to sin.

It seems to me I then performed all kinds of good, freed from self-hood or self-regard, and if a self-regard presented itself, it was at once dissipated. It seemed to me as if a curtain was drawn, which covered that thought, and made it no longer appear. My imagination was entirely fixed, so I had no longer trouble with it. I was astonished at the clearness of my mind and purity of my heart. I received a letter from Father La Combe, who wrote me that God had made him know he had great designs for me; whether they be of justice, or of mercy, all is alike to me. It had been said to him, "You shall both dwell in the same place." He knew no more, and God did not then let him know anything more particular. I had still Geneva in the bottom of my heart, without mentioning it to any one. I did not stop even to think of it, or of what Father La Combe had told me of the designs of God for my soul. I received all this with an entire indifference, without wishing either to occupy myself with it or to think of it; awaiting all, O my God, from your all-powerful will. As my abjectness was still so near, I feared even it might be a trick of the Devil, who, by amusing me with the thought of a good I had not, would make me lose that I possessed, by withdrawing me from my state. This fear was gentle, peaceable, animated with confidence and hope. The more miserable I saw myself, the more suitable for your designs, O God, I saw myself; and it seemed to me my abjectness, my incapacity, and my nothingness, not being able to rob God of anything he did, he alone would have all the glory of his works. I said to you, "O my Lord, take the miserable and the stupid to perform your works in order that all the glory may be given to you, and that man may claim

nothing of it. If you took a person of great virtue, and enriched with talents, something might be ascribed to him, but if you take me it will be well seen you alone are the author of all that you shall do." I remained thus, without thinking any more of it, nor occupying myself with it in the very least, convinced, as I was, that if you wished anything from me, my God, you would furnish me with the means. I, however, kept myself in expectancy, with a firm will to execute your orders at the expense of my own life when you should make them known. You removed all crosses, and you gave me so great a facility for everything, I was surprised at it. I took again to dressing wounds, and you caused me to heal the most incurable. When the surgeons would no longer attend to them or wanted to cut off the diseased limbs, it was then you caused me to cure them. I became so free, I could have remained all day in church, although I had nothing of the sensible; and also I was no way distressed at not being there, finding everywhere, in a very great immensity and vastness, him whom I no longer possessed, but who had swallowed me up in himself.

Oh, how truly have I experienced what you say in your Gospel, which is repeated in the four Gospels not without reason, and even said twice in one Gospel, that whoever will lose his life shall find it, and whoever will save it, shall lose it. O happy loss, which a happy necessity forced me to make. When I believed myself lost without resource, it was then I found myself saved. When I no longer hoped anything from myself, I found all in my God. When I had lost every good, I found in him all kinds of good. When I had lost all created and even divine supports, I found myself under the happy necessity of falling into the Divine itself, and of falling into it through everything I thought separated me the further from it. In losing all the gifts I found the Giver. In losing you, my God, in me, I found you in yourself, in the immovable, to

lose you no more. O poor creatures, who pass all your life in tasting the gifts of God, and who think thereby you are the most favoured and the most happy; how I yet pity you, if you do not go to my God through the loss of those same gifts! How many souls pass all their life in this way, and believe themselves prodigies! There are other persons who, being destined by God to die to themselves, pass all their life in a dying life and in strange agonies, without ever entering into God through total death and loss, because they still wish under good pretexts to retain something, and never lose themselves in all the extent of the designs of God. For this reason they never enjoy God in fulness, which is a loss that will only be perfectly known in the other life.

O my Lord, what happiness did I not taste in my little solitude, and my little household, where nothing interrupted my repose! As I was a long time in the country, and the tender age of my children did not require too much of my attention, besides that they were in good hands, I withdrew all day into the wood, where I passed as many happy days as I had had there months of grief. For it was there I previously gave free course to grief to destroy me. It was also where in the commencement I gave place to love to consume me, and it was where now I let myself be more lost in an infinite and incomprehensible abyss. I can tell nothing of what took place in me, as it was too pure, too simple and too outside of me.

You treated me, O my God, like your servant Job, restoring to me double what you had taken from me, and delivering me from my crosses. You gave me a wonderful facility to please everybody, and what is more surprising, my mother-in-law, who up to that had always complained of me, whatever care I might have taken to satisfy her, declared that it was impossible to be more pleased with me than she was. Persons who had most decried me expressed sorrow at it, and became my panegyrists. My

reputation was the more firmly established as it appeared the more lost. I continued in an entire peace both outward and inward. You did that, O my God, to render the sacrifice you were preparing to cause me to make both more painful and more perfect; for had I been obliged to break away during the time of persecution, it would have been a relief, and not a sacrifice; perhaps, also, I should never have been able to resolve to leave during the time of my troubles. I would always, doubtless, have been apprehensive of descending from the cross of myself and being unfaithful to it. It seems to me that one could not be more content and more happy than I was. As the cross had always been my faithful companion and friend, there awoke from time to time little pains at no longer suffering; but they were immediately absorbed in a central depth which could not admit any desires. Although the body suffered great pains, there was no longer pain, but a central depth which beatified everything. It seems to me that my soul was become like that New Jerusalem which is spoken of in the Apocalypse, where there is no more either crying or pain. The indifference in me was perfect, and the union to the good pleasure of God so great, that I did not find in myself any desire or tendency. What appeared then most lost in me was the will, for I did not find it for anything whatever. My soul could not incline herself more to one side than to another. All she could do was to nourish herself from the daily providences. She found another will had taken the place of her own—a will all divine, which yet was so her own and so natural, that she found herself infinitely more free in this will than she had been in her own.

These dispositions, which I describe as of a time past to avoid confusion, have ever since subsisted, and have even continually grown more strong and perfect up to the present hour. I could desire neither one thing nor the other; but I was content with all that happened without

paying attention to or reflecting on it, unless some one said to me, "Do you wish this or that?" and then I was astonished at no longer finding in me that which could wish. It was as if everything had disappeared from within me, and a greater power had taken its place. I had indeed experienced in the times preceding my trouble that a more powerful than I conducted me and made me act. I had not then, it seems to me, a will except to submit myself with acquiescence to all he did in me and through me; but here it was no longer the same. I had no more a will to submit; it had, as it were, disappeared, or, rather, passed into another will. It seems to me that this powerful and strong One did all that pleased him; and I no more found that soul which he formerly conducted by his crook and his staff with an extreme love. He appeared to me alone, and as if this soul had given place to him, or, rather, had passed into him, henceforth to become only one same thing with him.

O union of unity, asked from God by Jesus Christ for men, and earned by the same Jesus Christ, how powerful art thou in a soul that thou dost thus annihilate in her God! It is here, then, after the consummation of this divine unity, that the soul remains hidden with Jesus Christ in God. O happy loss, and so much the more happy as it is not one of those transitory losses that ecstasy produces, which are rather absorptions than losses, since the soul finds herself immediately after; but one of those permanent durable losses, which go on continually losing themselves in an immense sea, as a little fish would go continually sinking down into an infinite sea. But the comparison does not appear to me sufficiently accurate. It is rather like a little drop of water cast into the sea, which continually acquires more the qualities of the same sea. This soul was receiving, without power to incline herself or to choose. When I speak of power, I do not understand it of absolute power, but of that of a soul

which has still elections and desires. She received in perfect indifference what was given or done to her. At the commencement she still committed some faults of precipitancy; but this was as if outside of her, without, however, her knowing her state.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I was obliged to go to Paris for some business, and having entered a church, which was very gloomy, to make my confession, I went to the first confessor I found, whom I did not know, and whom I have never since seen. I simply made my confession—a very short one—and did not say a word to this confessor. I was greatly surprised when he said to me, "I know not who you are, whether you are maid, wife, or widow; but I feel a strong interior movement to tell you, that you should do what our Lord has made you know he desired of you. I have only that to say to you." I answered him, "My Father, I am a widow, who have little children four and six years of age. What else could God desire of me but to rear them?" He said to me, "I know nothing of it. You know whether God has made you recognize that he wished something of you. If it is so, there is nothing which should hinder you from doing his will. One must leave one's children to do it."

This greatly surprised me. I, however, said nothing to him of what I felt for Geneva. I, nevertheless, quietly prepared myself to leave everything if you wished it of me, O my God, and if you brought about the opportunities through your divine providence. I did not look upon it as a good to which I aspired, nor as a virtue I hoped to acquire, nor as an extraordinary thing, nor as an act which deserved some return on God's part. I did not

embrace it as through zeal—this appeared dead in me; but I let myself gently go to what I was told was the will of God, to which mine could make no resistance—not through acquiescence as formerly, but as no longer existing, and no longer distinguishing or paying attention. While I was in this disposition, living in my family with extreme tranquillity, without troubling myself with all that, a monk of the Order of St. Dominic, one of my friends, had a great desire to go as a missionary to Siam. He dwelt at twenty leagues from us. When he was ready to make the vow that he had written out to repeat, it was not possible for him to do so. He was given to understand he ought to come and speak to me about it. He came immediately, and, as he had some repugnance to telling me, he went to say the Mass in my chapel, believing God would be satisfied if he should make his vow while celebrating the Mass in my hearing. But he was hindered; so that he left the chapel after he had put on the amice, which he took off to come and speak to me. He then told me his project. Although I had no feeling or thought of doing anything positive, I felt myself impelled to tell him what had happened to me, and the notion which I had a long time for Geneva. I related to him even a dream that appeared supernatural, which had occurred to me on the night of the Transfiguration, the 6th August, exactly one year before I made the vows, of which I will speak hereafter. I seemed to see the ecclesiastic of our house with my youngest son, looking with much admiration at the heaven. They cried out that the heaven was open. They begged me to come, that they saw Tabor and the heaven opened. I told them I did not wish to go there; that Tabor was not for me; that I needed only Calvary. They pressed me so strongly to go out that, unable to resist their importunity, I went. I saw only a remnant of light; and at the same time I saw descending from heaven a cross of immense size. I saw a number of people of all

kinds—priests, monks—endeavouring to hinder it coming. I did nothing but remain quietly in my place, without trying to take it; but I was content. I perceived it approached me. With it there was a standard of the same colour as the cross. It came and cast itself of its own accord into my arms. I received it with extreme joy. The Benedictines having wished to take it from me, it withdrew from their hands to cast itself into mine.

As I was conversing with the Father about this, I had a strong movement to say to him, "My Father, you will not go to Siam. You will serve me in this business, and it is for this God has sent you here. I beg you to give me your opinion." (He is very learned.) He told me he would remain three days with me in the country, and that, after having recommended the business to God for these three days, and said three Masses, he would let me know his sentiment. After this time, then, he told me that he believed it was the will of God I should go to that country, but in order to be more sure, it was necessary to see the Bishop of Geneva; that if he approved my design, it was a mark that it was of God; that if he condemned it, I should think no more of it. I adopted his view, and he offered to go to Annécy, to see the Bishop of Geneva and speak to him, and to give me a faithful report of what they should have determined together. As he was advanced in years, we were discussing in what way he should make such a long journey without being inconvenienced, when there arrived two monks, passers-by, who told us the Bishop of Geneva was at Paris. This appeared to me, O my God, a miracle of your providence. The worthy monk resolved to go there. He counselled me to write to Father La Combe to know his sentiment, and to recommend the business to his prayers, for he knew he was of that country. He then spoke at Paris to the Bishop of Geneva, and as there occurred an affair, which Divine Providence arranged for

me, to oblige me to go to Paris, I spoke myself to the Bishop of Geneva.

I told him my design was to go into that country, and there to employ my wealth in founding an establishment for all those who would truly turn to God and give themselves to him without reserve; that many servants of God, both male and female, assured me God demanded this of me; and although I did not feel any marked inclination for it, I yet thought myself bound to obey the voice of God, which was indicated to me, since so many different persons, mutually unacquainted, and far separated the one from the other, told me the same thing. The Bishop of Geneva approved of my design, and informed me that there were some New Catholics who wished to go and establish themselves at Gex, and that it was a providence. I answered him I had no vocation for Gex, but for Geneva. He told me I should be able to go thence to Geneva. I believed it was an opportunity which Divine Providence sent me, to make the journey with less difficulty, and as I knew nothing positive of what God wished of me, I would not offer any opposition. "Perhaps," I said, "he desires that I should merely contribute to this establishment."

I went to see the Superior of the New Catholics at Paris, to know how things were going on. She testified great joy, and assured me she would be one of the party. As she is a great servant of God, this confirmed me, for when I could reflect a moment, which was rare, I thought God would take her for her virtue and me for my money; for as soon as through unfaithfulness I regarded myself, I could not believe God wished to make use of me; but when I saw things in God, it seemed to me that the more insignificant I was, the more suited was I to his designs. As I did not see anything in me extraordinary, and believed myself in the lowest stage of perfection, and it appeared to me for want of light—for my soul was not perfectly established in the eternal light, which is you, O my God—as, I

say, it appeared to me that extraordinary lights were needed for extraordinary designs, this made me hesitate and fear deception. I did not sufficiently understand that to follow step by step your divine providence was the greatest and purest light; and besides this, you gave me continual lights, and so much the more admirable as I the less sought them. It is not that I feared anything for my salvation and perfection, which I had made over to God; but I feared not doing his will from being too desirous to do it. I went to consult Father Claude Martin, son of the Mother of the Incarnation, of Canada. He did not then decide anything for me, asking time to pray, and that he would write to me what was God's will for me.

I had some hesitation in speaking to M. Bertot, as well owing to the difficulty of speaking to him, as because I knew how much he condemned anything extraordinary; and besides he gave me no assistance for my spiritual life, which, he said, was the prayer of affection, although I did not know what it meant. I submitted against my own lights to what he told me, though he had previously declared it the prayer of faith; but I gave up all my own experience when it was a question of believing and obeying. How should he have known my spiritual state when I could tell him nothing of it? I thought, however, though he did not aid me, I ought to address him on a matter of this importance, and to prefer his lights to all others, persuaded as I was he would infallibly tell me the will of God. I went to him then, and he told me my design was from God, and that some time previously God had made known to him he wished something of me. I believed him without hesitation, and I returned to arrange everything. The more confirmed I saw myself, the more apprehensive I was without apprehension, because I much loved my children, and no one could be more contented than I then was. When I returned home, I abandoned, or rather, left myself in the hands of God, resolved not to take a step

either to further or hinder the matter. I left myself a prey to providence, making a sacrifice in the will, while waiting to make a real one.

I had mysterious dreams which presaged only crosses, persecutions and griefs. My heart submitted itself to all that its God could will for it. I had one very significant. While engaged in some necessary work, I saw near me a very small animal which looked as if dead. This animal appeared to me to be the envy of some persons which seemed lately to be deadened. I caught this animal, and as I saw he exerted himself to sting me and grew bigger under my eyes, I threw him away. I found he had filled my fingers, as it were, with needles. I went up to a person I knew very well in order that he should remove them for me; but he stuck them deeper into me, and I continued full of these stings until a charitable priest of extraordinary merit (whose face is still before me, although I have never seen him; but I believe I shall see him before dying) caught that animal with pincers. As soon as he held it tight, my stings fell out of themselves, and I found an easy entrance into a place which had previously appeared to me inaccessible; and although there was mud as deep as the waist in going to a deserted church, I passed over it without soiling myself. It will be easy from the sequel of my life to see what this signifies.

People, doubtless, will be astonished that, attaching so little importance to things extraordinary, I relate these dreams. I do it for two reasons: the first, through fidelity, having promised to omit nothing that should occur to my mind; the second, because it is the mode God makes use of to communicate with souls of faith, to give them intimations of the future in things that concern them; although there is a manner of knowing of extreme purity with which he endows them, and which I shall explain elsewhere. These extraordinary dreams are found in numerous places in Holy

Scripture. They have especial characteristics, such as, to leave a certainty they are mysterious, and that they will be realized in their time; of almost never escaping from the memory, though one forgets all others; of redoubling the certainty of their truth as often as one thinks of them or speaks of them; moreover, they produce for the most part on waking up a certain unction.

A Benedictine nun, who is a most holy woman, in their refectory saw our Lord on the cross and the Holy Virgin near him, and they appeared in great pain. They made movements which seemed to mark their sufferings and the desire they had to find some one who would be willing to share them. She ran to inform the prioress. She said she was busy and could not go. In fact, she was amusing herself with flowers and trees. Not finding any one who was willing to go, in great trouble she met and told me. I at once ran there, and our Lord appeared very pleased. He received and embraced me as if to associate me in his sufferings, after which he no longer had pain. When she told me this, I said nothing to her of my designs. At the moment I understood they were designs of crosses, disgrace and ignominy, to make me bear Jesus crucified.

I received a letter from Father La Combe, who told me that he had caused some very holy women in that neighbourhood to pray, and that all said God wanted me at Geneva. A nun of the Visitation, who is a very holy woman, told me that God had made the same thing known to her, and that it had been said to her, "She will be daughter of the Cross of Geneva." An Ursuline also informed me that our Lord had said to her, that he destined me to be the eye of the blind, the foot of the lame, etc. The ecclesiastic who was at our house greatly feared I might be deceived; but what finished in confirming him for that time was, that Father Claude Martin, of whom I have spoken, wrote me that God had made known to him after many prayers that he wanted me at Geneva, that he

wanted me to make a generous sacrifice of everything. I answered him that perhaps God wanted only a sum of money from me to assist a foundation that was about to be established there; that I would furnish it without leaving my children. He answered me, that God had made known to him that he did not want my wealth, that he wanted my person. I received this letter and at the same time another from Father La Combe, who told me the certainty God had given him and numerous worthy servants of God, that God wanted me at Geneva. Although these two monks were more than a hundred and fifty leagues distant the one from the other, they wrote me almost the same thing. I was surprised, receiving at the same time these two almost identical letters from people so remote.

As soon as I believed it was your will, O my God, I did not see anything on earth capable of stopping me. My senses were nevertheless given over to the pain that such a determination must naturally cause a mother who loves her children, and as soon as I reflected, doubt seized my mind. I had no interior witness. I felt neither inclination nor desire, but rather repugnance; yet I surrendered myself against all hope, resting on faith in God, who does not permit those that trust him to be confounded. O my Love, if I had rested on myself or in the creature, I should have been apprehensive. It would have seemed to me that I should experience what is said in Scripture, that I should have rested on a reed, which, breaking, would have pierced my hand; but resting upon you alone, O Infinite Goodness, what can I fear? What! you who deliver those who hardly call upon you, could you deceive or abandon those who leave everything to do your will? I resolved to go like a mad woman, without being able to give motive or reason for my enterprise. They assured me you wished it, O my God, and it was enough to make me undertake things the most impossible. I felt no confidence in all those who signified to me your will. I thought that as they did not

know me, they were deceived, and the sight of my paltriness made me fear everything. Yet a confidence above all confidence made me see that it was better to be deceived doing what I believed to be your will than to walk with more assurance, according to ordinary rules, in failing to do it. Then I said, "I am not worth the trouble of fearing to be deceived. O my God, you cannot deceive." I firmly believed that you would by your providence furnish all that was necessary for the education of my children, and this in pure faith; for the senses were without support. I made arrangements gradually, without eagerness, not wishing to do the least thing either to put off the business or to advance it, or to make it succeed. Providence was my sole guidance. I had the infidelity to reflect, and immediately I hesitated; but my thoughts were only, as it were, distractions, which were dissipated by faith. I, however, caused many Masses to be said. I caused devotions to be performed on all sides. I even gave gifts to a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin in order to obtain the grace of doing your will, and large alms for that of knowing it.

CHAPTER XXX.

It seemed, O my God, that while working by your providence to make me leave all, you daily made my ties stronger and my departure more blamable. For, in short, one could not receive greater kindness from one's own mother than what my mother-in-law showed me at this time. The least petty ailment I had threw her into mortal disquietude. She said she had veneration for the virtue you had placed in me. I believe that what not a little contributed to this change was that she learned from people who, without thinking of it, addressed themselves to her, that three persons had sought me in marriage; and as I had refused them, although they were of a rank much above mine, and with great advantages, she was surprised at it; but what most struck her was that she remembered she had said to me at the time these persons were wooing me, that if I did not marry it was because I did not get the chance, and that I had not answered her a word to let her know it only depended on me to do so most advantageously. She thought that such harsh treatment as she had dealt me might perhaps induce me to yield to the proposals in order to deliver myself honourably from the tyranny. She well enough saw the injury this would be to my children. In short, you opened her eyes, and changed her harshness to tenderness.

I fell extremely ill. I thought, O my God, you were

pleased with the will of my sacrifice, and you wished that of my life. It was in this illness my mother-in-law showed me the tenderness she had for me. She hardly stirred from my bedside, and the tears she shed showed the sincerity of her affection. I felt very grateful to her, and it seemed to me I loved her as a true mother. Why should I leave her when she loved me so much, and was so advanced in years? That maid, who hitherto had been my plague, took an inconceivable affection for me. She praised me everywhere, saying I was a true saint, although I was so far from it. She served me with extraordinary respect; begged my pardon for what she had made me suffer. She died of regret after my departure.

There was a priest of worth, and spiritually minded, who had accepted an employment, contrary to advice I had given him. I could not believe God wished it for him. It was that he engaged himself with the man with whom I had formerly been connected, and who so much persecuted me. He did it secretly, after having told me he would not do so. Our Lord, who wished to save him, made him soon die. I saw him gradually fall from his grace through this infidelity, at the time of the persecution by that person, with whom he dwelt. I learned that he had adopted what he told him of me; that he had even jested on it with him. I took no notice, and did not even see him. I was in the country when he died. I had no necessity to be informed of his death. For forty-eight hours I bore him under a pain of purgatory and great terrors. It was given me to understand that he came to perform a purgatory with me, because he had been a partisan in the calumny. I communicated for him, and I no longer felt him. I have never borne purgatory so sensibly as that.

There was a nun in a convent I often went to. During six months I was in the country this woman had entered into a state of purification that every one in the house

regarded as madness. They shut her up even with violence, and this nearly ruined her. All persons they had shown her to said it was madness. On my return I went into that house. They told me she had become mad. I knew she was a holy woman. I asked to see her. As soon as she approached me, I felt the impression as from a soul in purgatory. I understood at once it was not madness, but a state of purification. I said to the Superior, I begged they would not shut her up; that they would not show her to any one; and that she would have the kindness to trust her to me; that I hoped things would change. I understood her greatest trouble was to pass as mad; that she had a very great repugnance for this; and that when the state of madness presented itself to her mind with the thought of sacrificing herself to it, far from doing so, she resisted and became quite furious. I counselled her to sacrifice herself to bear the state of madness, which Jesus Christ had been willing to bear before Herod. This sacrifice gave her at once more calm; but as God wished to purify this soul, he purified her from all things to which she had had most attachment. She had for her Superior a very strong attachment. She experienced as regards her a strange trouble, which was a desire of seeing her and being near her, and as soon as she approached her, a frightful hatred and opposition. It was the same in all her spiritual exercises for which she had had attachment. She formerly passed days before the Holy Sacrament; and now she could not continue there a single instant. This convinced them still more she was mad. I had in my central depth an instinct of just judgment, which did not deceive me, and I asserted the contrary; but as to the impression of her state as that of purgatory, it was given me when she approached me. At last, after having suffered strangely, her Superior wrote me that I had been right, and that she had emerged from it purified as an angel. God permitted I was the only person who knew her state.

You commenced to give me at this time, O my God, the discernment of spirits.

The winter preceding the year of my departure was one of the longest and most severe there had been for many years. It was in 1680. There was extreme want, which furnished me with the opportunity of exercising large charities; for besides what I gave in secret to respectable persons in poverty, who were very numerous, that which was done at the house in distributing bread to all the rest was very great. My mother-in-law shared in that of the house, and we joined together for the purpose. She contributed to it with much kindness and charity; and I found her so changed I was surprised and delighted at it. We used to give away at the house ninety-six dozen loaves every week; but the secret charities were larger. I had girls and little boys put to a trade. All this caused my departure to be much blamed, and the more so as my charities had been striking. At this time I did not find anything difficult, and you gave, O my God, such a blessing to my alms that I did not find it cost anything to my family, which extremely surprised me. Previous to the death of my husband, my mother-in-law having told him I would ruin him through my charities (although he was himself so charitable that in a year of scarcity, while he was yet unmarried, he distributed a very considerable sum)—as, however, my mother-in-law said this to him very often (and certainly I used to give excessively), he told me that he wished absolutely I should write down all I expended—what I gave for the expense of the house, all that I caused to be bought, in order he might judge of what I gave to the poor. This new obligation appeared to me the more harsh that during the eleven years I had been married, they had not thought of it. It was not the affront that hurt me, I think; it was rather the fear of not having the means of giving. I, however, submitted to it without retrenching anything from my charities.

Wonder of your providence, O my God! I did not write any of my alms, and my expense was found right without a shilling more or less. I was amazed, and I saw that my charities were given from your capital. This made me still more liberal of a wealth which did not belong to me. Oh, if people only knew how charities, far from inconveniencing, bring plenty, they would be charmed at it. What useless extravagance there is which might maintain the poor, and which God would even repay to the families!

During the time of my great troubles, some years after my widowhood, the servants of the house came to tell me that there was on the road a poor soldier dying; for I was in the country. I made them bring him, and having had a bed prepared in a separate place, I kept him for more than fifteen days. I made him receive the Sacraments. His ailment was a dysentery caught in the army. He was so stinking, so poisonous, that although they were charitable enough in the house, no one could approach him. I continued to attend on him, and through your goodness, O my God, you did not permit any harm to happen to me. I sometimes used to keep poor persons to dress their wounds, but that cost me nothing. This smell was the most terrible I have ever experienced in my life, and he died of the disease.

What caused me still more trouble was the tenderness I had for my children, especially for my younger son, whom I had reason to love. I saw him disposed to good, and it seemed to me that everything in his natural disposition favoured the hopes I had conceived of him. It was a great risk to leave him to be educated by others, and this cost me more trouble in leaving him than all the rest. I would have wished to take my daughter with me. I did not think I ought to leave her, but she was suffering for three years from a triple-quartan fever, so that it appeared out of the question to take her. Yet, O my God,

you, through your providence, caused her health to be restored so suddenly and so perfectly, four months before my departure, that I found her in a state to go with me.

The bonds by which you held me united to you, O my God, were infinitely stronger than those of flesh and blood. It seemed to me my only duty was to do your will, and, though I should not have been yours in virtue of my creation, and through the engagement of my redemption; the laws of my sacred marriage, are they not to leave all to follow the Spouse? I had then to follow you where you called me, for, although I hesitated much before setting out, I have never doubted afterwards it was your will, and although men who judge things according to the measure of success they appear to have, have taken the opportunity of my defeat and my disgraces to judge my call, and to convict it of error, illusion, and falsity, it is this very overthrow, and the strange multitude of crosses it has drawn upon me, which have made me convinced of its truth; so that, although the prison where I now am be a consequence of it, I am more convinced than ever that the abandonment I have made of all things has been according to your will. If it was not so, your Gospel would not be true, where it promises a hundred-fold in this life and persecutions to those who will quit all for your love. Have I not had the hundred-fold infinitely through the entire possession you have taken of me; through the unshaken firmness you give me in my sufferings; through perfect tranquillity in the midst of the most furious tempest with which I am beaten from every side; through a joy, largeness, and infinite liberty in the closest and strictest imprisonment? What persecutions have burst upon me, as will be seen, and which I am not yet at the end of, since I am still a prisoner! I do not desire my prison to cease; I love my chains. All is alike to me, since I have no other will nor other love than the love and the will of him who possesses me, and into whom I am passed. It

must not be thought he gives me a sensible taste for my crosses. My heart is far removed from that. They are all borne very purely, but with a firmness which is not in me, or of me, but in him who is our life, since I dare to say with my Apostle, "I no longer live, but Jesus Christ lives in me." "It is in him we live, we move, and have our being."

To return to the subject, from which I often wander without thinking of it. I say then that what caused me the most trouble, was not so much going away, as binding myself to the New Catholics. I wished to find in myself an attraction towards them. I sought it and I found nothing. This institution was opposed to my mind and to my heart; not that I would not love to contribute to the conversion of erring souls, since I had for their conversion as much attraction as I was capable of, considering how very dead and annihilated I was as to my central depth; but the manner of life and spirit of this institution did not suit me, and when I wished to conquer myself in this point, and connect myself with them, my soul lost her peace. I might have thought I should have been well suited to them, since you had made use of me, O my God, before my departure to convert entire families, one of which was composed of eleven or twelve persons. Besides, Father La Combe had told me to make use of this opportunity for starting, and did not tell me whether I should bind myself to them or not; thus it was the providence of my God alone, to which I had given myself up without reserve, that hindered me from binding myself with them.

One day that through infidelity I reflected on this enterprise, I was a little disturbed by the fear of being mistaken, which increased when the house ecclesiastic, who was the only person to whom I had confided my secret, told me I was badly advised, that I certainly had not properly explained myself. Being a little cast down

I had a movement to open Isaiah. On opening the book I found this passage: "Fear not, O Jacob, who art a little worm, and you Israel, who are as it were dead. It will be I who shall lead you. Fear not, for you are mine. When you shall walk through the waters I will be with you." I had a very great courage to go, but I could not persuade myself it was in order to be with the New Catholics. It was, however, necessary that, before setting out, I should see Sister Garnier, Superior of the New Catholics at Paris, in order to take measures with her; but I could not go to Paris because this journey would have prevented my making another at the time it would have been necessary for me to start. Although this person was very ailing, she resolved to come and see me; but, O my God, you conducted things in such a manner through your providence, to make everything come to the point of your will, that I saw every day new miracles which charmed me; for with paternal kindness you took care of the smallest things. When she was about to set out she fell ill, and you permitted it so to give time for a person who would have discovered everything to go on a journey. At last she started, still very weak, and, as she had informed me of the day of her departure, when on that day I saw it was excessively hot, and so close that I fancied, petted, as she was, in her own community, that she would not be let start (which was true, as she herself has since told me), I addressed myself to our Lord to give some wind to moderate the heat, and enable the worthy woman to come. Hardly had I said this when there suddenly sprung up a wind so cool I was astonished at it, and this wind did not cease during her whole journey, until after her return.

I went to meet her, and took her to a country house, so that she was not seen or recognized by anybody. What embarrassed me a little was, I had two servants who knew her; but as I was engaged on the conversion of a lady, I

led the conversation so that they easily thought it was for this purpose I had made her come, and that it was necessary to keep the secret in order this lady might not be deterred from coming by knowing who she was. You caused, O my God, that, although I was no controversialist, I yet answered all her doubts, so that she could not help yielding. Sister Garnier had much talent and grace, but her words did not produce in that soul the effect those you made me speak produced, as she has herself assured me. She could not even help saying so. I felt a movement to ask her from you as a testimony of your holy will. You granted her to me, O my God, although she did not make her abjuration until after my departure, and not before it; as you wished to make me start without other assurance than this, that the Divine Providence conducted all things. The Sister was four days without declaring her thoughts to me; on the fourth, she told me she would not come with me. I was the more surprised at it, as I had been persuaded, God, without having regard to my abjectness, would give to her virtue what he would refuse to my ill-deserts. Besides, the subjects she proposed to me appeared without supernatural grace, and quite human. This made me hesitate some moments; then, taking new courage through the abandonment of my entire self, I said to her, "I am not going there for you. I will, none the less, go there without you." She was surprised, as she confessed to me; for she thought as soon as she decided not to go I would be no longer willing. I arranged everything; and I wrote on a paper the terms of the contract of association with them. I had no sooner done it than, after the Communion, I felt dreadful burnings and trouble. I went to see Sister Garnier; and as I knew she had the Spirit of God, I made no difficulty of telling her my pain. I made her understand that I had no doubt God called me to Geneva; but I did not know if he wished me of their congregation. She asked until after the Mass and the

Communion; and she would tell me what God wished of me. You made use of her, in spite of her own interests and against her inclination, to make me know your will, my Lord. She told me then I ought not to bind myself with her, and that it was not your design; that I should go simply with the Sisters; and when I should be there, Father La Combe (whose letter she had seen) would signify to me your will. I acquiesced at once in this advice, and my soul recovered her peace.

My first design, or, rather, my first thought had been, before learning that the New Catholics were going to Gex, to go to Geneva, where at that time there were Catholics in service and otherwise, and to settle in a small room without *éclat*, and without at first declaring myself; and as I knew how to make various ointments, to dress wounds, especially king's-evil, which was very prevalent in that place, and for which I had a very certain remedy, I would have thus quietly insinuated myself; besides the charities I would have given them. In this way I would have gained there many persons. I do not doubt if I had adopted this course things might perhaps have succeeded better. Yet I believed I would do better in following the opinion of the Bishop than my own lights. But what am I saying, O my God; has not your eternal design been realized and accomplished in me? We speak humanly because we are human; but, O God, when we regard things in you, we see them with other eyes. Yes, my Lord, your design was to give Geneva not to my labour and my words, but to my sufferings; for the more desperate I see things, the more I expect the conversion of that town, by a way known to you alone. Yes, Geneva, you will see within your walls the truth again flourish, which has been banished by error; and those beautiful words which are written on your Town Hall, "After darkness, Light," will be happily verified for you. And although at present you take them in a quite contrary sense, it is certain you will be one day illuminated

with the light of truth, and that fine temple of St. Peter will again have the advantage of enclosing in its bosom our redoubtable mysteries. How true in one sense it is, O my Lord, that you have made me daughter of the Cross of Geneva, and that I would cheerfully give my blood to see your cross erected there. Father La Combe has since told me that he had had on his side a strong movement to tell me not to bind myself with the New Catholics; that he did not believe it was the will of God, but he forgot it. I could no longer consult M. Bertot, for he died four months before my departure. I had some sign of his death. I was the only person to whom he addressed himself. It has seemed to me that he communicated to me his spirit to assist his children. A fear seized me that the repugnance I had felt of stripping myself in favour of the New Catholics of what I destined for Geneva was a trick of nature, which was unwilling to despoil itself. I wrote to Sister Garnier to have a contract drawn up according to my first memorandum. You permitted me, O my God, to commit this fault to make me recognize better your protection over me.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

I SET out after the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin in a strange abandonment, unable to give an account of what made me set out, leaving my family, which I tenderly loved, and without any positive assurance, hoping, however, even against hope. I reached the New Catholics at Paris, where you worked miracles of providence to conceal me. They sent to fetch the notary who had drawn up the contract of engagement. When he read it to me I felt so strange a repugnance, that it was not possible for me to hear it finished, much less to sign it. The notary was surprised, but he was still more so when Sister Garnier came herself to tell him that there was no necessity for a contract of engagement. It was, O my God, your goodness alone that managed things in this way, for in my then disposition, it seems to me, I would have given the preference to Sister Garnier's views over my own. It was you, O my Lord, who made her thus speak, for she has been since much opposed to me, when they wished to bind me against my will and by force. You had done me the favour, my God, to put my affairs into perfect order, so that I was myself surprised at it, and at the letters you caused me to write, in which I had hardly any part beyond the movement of the hand. And it

was at this time that it was given me to write by the interior spirit, and not by my intellect, which till then I had never experienced. So that my manner of writing was quite changed, and people were astonished, I wrote with such facility. I was not at all astonished; but what was then given me as a sample, has since been given to me with much more force and perfection, as I shall tell in the sequel. You began to render me unable to write in the ordinary human way.

I had with me two servants, to get rid of whom was very difficult, for I did not think of bringing them with me; and if I left them they would have told of my departure, and people would have been sent after me, as was done when it was known. You so well arranged all things, O my God, by your providence, that they desired to go with me. And I have since clearly seen that you had done this only to prevent my being discovered; for, besides their being of no use to me, they very soon after returned to France. I set out from Paris, and although I was extremely grieved to leave my younger son, the confidence I had in the Holy Virgin, to whom I had vowed him, and whom I looked on as his mother, calmed all my griefs. I found him in such good hands that it seemed to me it would be doing an insult to the Queen of heaven to doubt that she was taking a particular care of the child.

I took with me my daughter and two maids to attend us both. We set out by water (although I had engaged the diligence), in order to escape being found if any one was looking for me. I went to Melun to wait for it. What was astonishing was that in the boat, my daughter, without knowing what she was doing, could not help making crosses. She kept a person employed in cutting rushes, and then she made them into crosses and quite covered me with them. She put more than three hundred on me. I let her do it, and I understood interiorly that there was a

mystery in what she was doing. There was then given to me an inward certainty that I was going there only to reap crosses, and that this little girl was sowing the Cross for me to gather. Sister Garnier, who saw that whatever they did they could not prevent the child from loading me with crosses, said to me, "What this child is doing appears to me very mysterious." She said to her, "My little lady, put crosses on me also." She answered, "They are not for you; they are for my dear mother." She gave her one to please her, then she continued putting them on me. When she had put on a very great number, she had river flowers, which were found on the water, given to her, and making a wreath with them, she placed it on my head, and said to me, "After the Cross you will be crowned." In silence I wondered at all this, and I immolated myself to Love as a victim to be sacrificed to him.

Some time after my departure, a nun, who is a true saint, and a great friend of mine, related to me a vision she had about me. She said she saw my heart in the midst of a great number of thorns, so that it was quite covered with them, and that our Lord appeared in this heart, very well pleased; and she saw that the more strongly the thorns pricked, my heart, instead of being thereby disfigured, appeared more beautiful, and our Lord more pleased.

At Corbeil, on my way, I saw the Father of whom God had made use to draw me so strongly to his love. He approved my design to quit all for our Lord, but he thought that I would not be able to get on with the New Catholics; he even told me particular things on the point, to make me understand that their spirit, and that by which our Lord was conducting me, were almost incompatible. He said to me, "Above all, try that they shall not know you are walking by spiritual ways, for that will bring down on you persecutions." But, O my God, when it pleases you to make any one suffer, and he has yielded

himself into your hands, it is idle to screen one's self and take precautions; it is hard to escape from your providence, especially when the soul has no longer any will, and her will is passed into yours. Does she not herself strike where you strike? She seems to clothe herself in indignation against herself. Oh, if this soul could then appear to compassionate herself, to pity herself, with what fury of love and indignation would she not wish for herself greater ills and a more frightful destruction! O King of lovers, you have struck against yourself with all the justice of a God; this soul, destined to imitate you, and to be conformable to you, strikes herself with your justice. O wonderful thing, unknown to those who have not experienced it!

While at Paris I gave the New Catholics all the money that I had. I did not reserve a penny for myself, being delighted to be poor, after the example of Jesus Christ. I brought from my house nine thousand livres, and I gave all to the New Catholics. A contract was drawn up for six thousand livres as a repayment, which they said they had need of; and as in the sequel they declared that they had this money on contract, and I had not reserved it for myself by my settlement deed, thinking it would not be known, it has been returned to my children, and I have lost it; at which I feel not the least vexation, for poverty constitutes my riches. The remainder I gave to the Sisters who were with us, both to meet the expenses of the journey, and to commence providing furniture. I gave them beside that the church ornaments, a chalice, a very beautiful sun of silver gilt, silver dishes, a ciboire, and everything needed by them. I did not even keep back my linen for my use, placing it in the common wardrobe. I had neither a locked cash-box nor a purse. Nevertheless, it was said that I had carried off large sums from my house, although that was very false. I had not even taken any linen but what was needed by me for a journey to Paris, for fear of

rousing suspicion, and lest I should be discovered if I tried to carry away clothes. I had little eagerness for the riches of this earth; on the contrary, I had more desire to leave them than to possess them. Those whom God makes use of to torment me, have not hesitated to say that I had carried off large sums of money which I had injudiciously spent and given to the relatives of Father La Combe; but that is as false as it is true, that I had not a penny, and that when I arrived at Annecy, and a poor man asked alms, the inclination I had to give to the poor not being extinguished in my heart, and having nothing whatever, I gave him the buttons which fastened the sleeves of my chemise; and another time I gave to a poor man, in the name of Jesus Christ, a little ring, quite plain, which I wore as a token of my marriage with the Child Jesus.

We joined the diligence at Melun, where I left Sister Garnier, and took my place with the other Sisters whom I did not know. What is wonderful is that, although the carriages were very fatiguing, and I did not sleep during this long journey, while I was then so delicate that the loss of sleep used to make me ill, and my daughter, an extremely delicate child only five years of age, did not sleep either, we nevertheless bore the great fatigue without suffering; and this child had not one hour's trouble, although she was only three hours in bed each night. You alone, O my God, know the sacrifices you caused me to make, and the joy of my heart to sacrifice to you all things. If I had had kingdoms and empires, it seems to me I would have given them up with still greater joy to show you more my love. O my God, is it to give up anything when we give it up for you? As soon as we reached the inn, I used to go to the church to adore the Holy Sacrament, and I remained there until the hour of dinner. We held, O my Love, you and I, a conversation in the carriage (or, rather, you alone in me) which the others could not understand, therefore they perceived nothing of

it; and the external gaiety I preserved even in the midst of the greatest dangers reassured them. I sung songs of joy to see myself disengaged from wealth, honour, and the embarrassments of the world. You helped us much by your providence, for you protected us in so singular a manner that it seemed you were the pillar of fire during the night, and the cloud during the day. We traversed an extremely dangerous pass between Chambéry and Lyons. Our carriage was broken at the exit of this dangerous pass; had it happened sooner we should have perished.

We reached Annecy, the eve of the Magdalen's Day, 1681; and on the Day of the Magdalen the Bishop of Geneva said Mass for us at the tomb of St. Francis de Sales. There I renewed my marriage, for I used to renew it every year, and, according to my very simple disposition, without introducing anything formal or distinct; but you placed in my central depth, which was pure and freed from species and forms, all that it pleased you should be there. These words were impressed on me: "I will espouse thee in faith, I will espouse thee for ever;" and these others: "You are to me a husband of blood." I there honoured the relics of St. Francis de Sales, with whom our Lord gave me a particular union. I say union, for it appeared to me that the soul in God is united with the saints, more or less, according as they are more conformed to her; and it is a union of unity, which it pleases our Lord sometimes to awake in her for his glory; and then those saints are rendered more intimately present to her in God himself. And this awakening is like an intercession of the soul, known to the saint and to the soul. It is a request of friend to friend in him who unites them all by an immortal bond. Ordinarily everything remains hidden with Jesus Christ in God.

We set out from Annecy the same Day of the Magdalen, and the next day we went to hear Mass at Geneva, at the house of the French Resident. I had much joy in

communicating; and it seems to me, O my God, that you there bound me more strongly to you. I asked of you the conversion of this great people. In the evening, late, we reached Gex, where we found only four walls, although the Bishop had assured us that there was furniture. Apparently he thought so. We slept at the Sisters of Charity, who had the kindness to give us their beds. I suffered a pain and agony, which can be better experienced than described, not so much on my own account, as for my daughter, who was visibly declining. I had a great desire to place her with the Ursulines at Tonon; and I was vexed with myself at not having taken her there in the first instance. Then all perceptible faith was taken from me, and a conviction remained that I had been mistaken. Pain took such possession of my heart that in my bed in secret I could not restrain my tears. The next day I said that I wished to take my daughter to Tonon, to the Ursulines, until I saw how we could arrange ourselves. My design was to leave her there. I was strongly opposed, and in a way cruel enough, and not honourable. I saw my daughter fade and grow thin, and in want of everything. I saw her as a victim, whom I had sacrificed by my imprudence. I wrote to Father La Combe, praying him to come and see me, to take measures thereon, not believing I could conscientiously keep her longer in that place. Many days passed away before I could have any answer. I was, however, very indifferent in the divine will of my God as to whether I received help or did not.

CHAPTER II.

Our Lord had pity on my trouble and the deplorable state of my daughter, and caused the Bishop of Geneva to write to Father La Combe to come and see and console us, and that it would oblige him if he made no delay. As soon as I saw the Father I was surprised to perceive an interior grace, which I may call "communication," that I had never experienced with any one. It seemed to me that an influence of grace came from him to me by the very inmost of the soul, and returned from me to him, so that he experienced the same effect; but grace so pure, so unalloyed, so separate from all sentiment, that it made a kind of flux and reflux, and then went to lose itself in the Divine and Invisible Unity. There was in it nothing human or natural, but all pure spirit. And this union, so pure and holy, which has always subsisted and even increased, becoming ever more one, has never arrested or occupied the soul for a moment out of God, leaving her always in a perfect freedom; union which God alone effects, and which can take place only between souls who are united to him; union free from all weakness and all attachment; union which makes one rejoice over, rather than compassionate, the sufferings of the other, and the more we see ourselves overwhelmed with crosses and overthrows, separated, destroyed, the happier one is; union which for its subsistence has no need of bodily presence; which absence

does not render more absent, nor presence more present; union unknown to any but those who experience it. As I had never had a union of this kind, it appeared to me then quite new, for I had never even heard that there was such; but it was so peaceable, so removed from all sentiment, that I have never had a doubt but that it was from God: for these unions, far from turning away from God, bury the soul more deeply in him. The grace which I experienced, and which caused this spiritual influence from him to me, from me to him, dissipated all my troubles and brought me into a profound calm.

God gave him from the first much openness with me. He told me the mercies which God had shown him, and many extraordinary things. I feared much this way of illumination. As my way had been by simple faith, and not in extraordinary gifts, I did not then understand that God wished to use me to withdraw him from the state of illumination, and to place him in the way of simple faith. These extraordinary things caused me fear at first. I dreaded illusion, especially in things which please, relating to the future, but the grace which came out from him, and which flowed through my soul, reassured me, besides that his humility was the most extraordinary I had yet seen; for I saw that he would have preferred the opinion of a little child to his own, that he did not cling to anything, and that, far from being puffed up, either by the gifts of God or his profound learning, one could not have a lower opinion of one's self than he had. It is a gift which God had bestowed on him in an eminent degree. He told me I should take my daughter to Tonon, and that there she would be very well off. He told me at once, after I had spoken to him of the internal repugnance I had for the manner of life of the New Catholics, that he did not believe God required me to join them, that I should remain there without an engagement, and that God would let me know by the course of his providence what he desired

of me, but that I should remain until God himself by his providence withdrew me from it, or by the same providence established me there. He determined to stay with us two days, and to say three Masses. He told me to ask our Lord to let me know his will. I could neither ask anything nor desire to know anything. I continued in my simple disposition. I had already commenced waking up so as to pray at midnight, but on this occasion I was roused up as if a person had awaked me; and on waking these words were suddenly put into my mind with some little impetuosity: "It is written of me that I will perform your will," and this insinuated itself into my soul with a flow of grace, so pure, yet so penetrating, that I have never experienced it more sweet, more simple, stronger, or more pure. I should remark here that although the then state of my soul was permanent in newness of life, that new life was not yet in the fixedness it has since been in; that is to say, properly, that it was an opening life and an opening day, which goes on increasing and strengthening itself to the meridian of glory—day, however, where there is no night; life which fears no longer death in death itself, because death has conquered death, and he who has suffered the first death will never taste the second death.

Now, it is well to say here that though the soul be in a state void of movement, and that she participates of the unchangeable, without the soul leaving her sphere or her heaven, steadfast and motionless, where there is neither distinction nor change, God, however, when it pleases him, sends from this very central depth certain influences which have distinctions, and which make known his holy will, or things about to happen; but as this comes from the central depth, and not by the intervention of the powers, it is certain, and not subject to illusion, as are visions and the other matters of which I have already spoken. For it should be known that such a soul as that I speak of receives all immediately from

the central depth, and thence it spreads itself over the powers and the senses as may be God's pleasure; but it is not so with other souls who receive mediately: that which they receive falls into the powers, and thence reunites in the centre, while the former souls discharge themselves from the centre over the powers and the senses. They let everything pass, without anything making impressions either upon their mind or their heart. Moreover, the things which they know or learn, such as prophecy and the rest, do not seem to them extraordinary, as they appear to others. The thing is said quite naturally, without knowledge of what one says, or why one says it, without anything extraordinary. One says and writes what one does not know, and in saying and writing it one sees that they are matters of which one had never thought. It is like a person who possesses in his central depth an inexhaustible treasure, without even thinking of the possession of it. It does not form part of his riches, and he pays no attention to it, but he finds in his central depth all that is necessary when he has use for it. The past, the present, and the future are there in way of the moment, present and eternal—not as prophecy, which regards the future as a thing to come; but in seeing everything in the present, in way of the eternal moment, in God himself; without knowing how he sees and knows; with a certain faithfulness in saying things as they are given, without plan or reflection, without thinking whether it is of the future or of the present one speaks; without troubling one's self whether the things come to pass or not, in one way or the other, whether they have one interpretation or another. It is from the central depth thus annihilated miracles proceed; it is the Word himself who effects what he says: "He spoke, and they were made;" without the individual soul knowing what she says or writes. In writing or speaking, she is enlightened with certainty that it is the word of truth which

will have its effect; as soon as it is done, she thinks no more of it, and takes no more interest in it than if it had been spoken or written by another. This is that which our Lord in the Gospel has said, "That the man brings from the good treasure of his heart things new and old." Since our treasure is God himself, and our heart and will is without any reserve entirely passed into him, it is there one finds a treasure which is never exhausted; the more one distributes from it, the richer one is. After these words had been put into my spirit, "It is written of me that I will do your will," I remembered that Father La Combe had told me to ask God what he desired of me in this country. My recollection was my request; immediately these words were put into my spirit with much quickness: "Thou art Pierre, and on this stone I will establish my church; and as Pierre died on the cross, thou shalt die upon the cross." I was convinced this was what God wished of me; but to understand its execution was what I took no trouble to know. I was invited to place myself on my knees, where I remained until four o'clock in the morning in very profound and peaceful prayer. I said nothing about it in the morning to Father La Combe. He went to say the Mass; he had an impulse to say it from the service for dedication of a church. I was still more confirmed, and I believed our Lord had made him know something of what had passed within me. I told him so after the Mass; he answered that I was mistaken. Immediately my mind gave up all thought and certainty, thinking no more of it, and remained in its ordinary frame, rather entering into that which the Father said than into that which he had known. The following night I was awaked at the same hour and in the same manner as the previous night, and these words were put into my mind: "Her foundations are in the holy mountains." I was put into the same state, which lasted until four in the morning, but I did not

think at all on what this meant, paying no attention to it. The next day after the Mass the Father told me that he had a very great certainty that I was "a stone which God destined to be the foundation of a great edifice," but he knew no more than I what that edifice was. In whatever way the thing is to be, whether His Divine Majesty wishes to use me in this life for some design known to him alone, or whether he wishes to make me one of the stones of the celestial Jerusalem, it seems to me that this stone is not polished except by blows of a hammer. Methinks that from this time out they have not been spared to it, as will be seen in the sequel; and that our Lord has indeed given it the qualities of stone, which are firmness and insensibility. I told him what had happened to me in the night.

I brought my daughter to Tonon. This poor child conceived a very great friendship for Father La Combe, saying that he was the good God's Father. On arriving at Tonon, I there found a hermit named Friar Anselm, of the most extraordinary holiness that had been known for a long time. He was from Geneva, and God had brought him out of it in a very miraculous manner at the age of twelve years, after having made known to him at the age of four years that he would turn Catholic. He had, with the permission of the Cardinal, then Archbishop of Aix in Provence, at nineteen years assumed the habit of an Augustinian hermit; he lived alone with another friar in a small hermitage, where they saw no one save those who came to visit their chapel. He had been for twelve years in this hermitage, eating nothing but vegetables and salt, sometimes with oil; he fasted continually without a moment's relaxation in the twelve years. Three times a week he fasted on bread and water, never drank wine, and ordinarily made only one meal in twenty-four hours. He wore a shirt of coarse hair, made with great cords of hair, which reached from top to bottom, and he

lay only on a board. He had a gift of continual prayer. He prayed specially for eight hours a day, and said his offices—with all this submissive as a child. God had worked through him many striking miracles. He came to Geneva hoping to be able to gain his mother, but he found her dead.

This good hermit had many intimations of the designs of God for me and Father La Combe; but God made him see at the same time that he was preparing strange trials for us both. He knew that God destined us both to help souls. He once during his prayer, which was all in gifts and illumination, saw me on my knees, clothed in a brown mantle, and my head was cut off, but immediately replaced; and then I was clothed in a very white robe, with a red mantle, and a crown of flowers was placed on my head. He saw Father La Combe cut into two pieces, which were soon reunited; and while in his hand he held a palm, he was stripped of his clothes, and reclothed in the white garment with the red mantle; after which he saw us both near a well, and that we were quenching the thirst of numberless people who came to us.

It seems to me, O my God, that this mysterious vision has already had its accomplishment in part, as well in the divisions he has suffered, and I also, however without pain, as in the confidence I have, that you have stripped him of himself to reclothe him in innocence, purity, and charity. Yes, my God, it appears to me that the love you have put into me is altogether pure, disengaged from all self-interest, a love which loves its object in himself and for himself, without any reference to itself; it would fear a self-regard more than Hell, for Hell without self-love would be for it changed into Paradise. Our Lord also has made much use of him and of me to gain souls; but I do not know what design he may have for us in the future. I know that we are his without any reserve. A little after my arrival at the Ursulines of Tonon, Sister M—— spoke

to me with much openness, following the order Father La Combe had given her. She told me at once so many extraordinary things that I became suspicious, and I thought there was illusion in her case; and I felt angry with myself.

I commenced to feel exceedingly troubled at having brought my daughter; and with regard to her I thought myself indeed an Abraham when Father La Combe accosted me with the words, "You are welcome, daughter of Abraham." I saw no reason for leaving her there; and I could still less keep her with me, for we had no room, and the little girls they brought to make Catholics of were all mixed up with us, and had dangerous ailments. To leave her there also appeared to me madness, considering the language of the country, where they hardly understood French, and the food which she could not take, being quite different from ours.

I saw her daily grow thin and fade away. This put me in an agony, and I felt as if one was tearing my vitals. All the tenderness I had for her sprung up afresh, and I regarded myself as her murderer. I experienced what Hagar suffered when she put away from her in the desert her son Ishmael, that she might not see him die. It appeared to me that though I had been willing to expose myself without reason, I ought at least to have spared my daughter. I saw the loss of her education, and even of her life, inevitable. I did not mention my troubles on this head, and the night was the time which gave scope to my grief that daily became more violent: because you permitted, O my God, you who have always desired of me sacrifices without reserve, that during the whole time I was there, they provided her with nothing which she could eat. All that kept her alive were some spoonfuls of bad broth which I made her take against her will. I gave her up to you, O my God, an entire sacrifice; and it seemed to me that, like another Abraham, I was holding the knife to kill

her. I was not willing to take her back, because I was told it was the will of God I should leave her there; and this will of God was for me preferable to everything, even the life of my daughter; besides, she would have been still worse off for food at Gex. Our Lord wished me to be utterly plunged in bitterness, and to make a sacrifice to him without alleviation.

On one side, he caused me to see the grief of her grandmother if she learned of her death, and that it seemed I had taken her away from her merely to kill her; on the other, the reproaches of the family. All her natural gifts were like arrows which pierced me. It would be necessary to experience what I suffered to understand it. With her natural disposition it seemed she would have done wonders if educated in France, and that I was depriving her of all this, and putting it out of her power to be fit for anything, or to find in the future proposals of marriage such as she might hope for, and that I could not without sin let her die thus. For thirteen days I suffered a trouble almost inconceivable: all that I had given up seemed to have cost me nothing in comparison with what the sacrifice of my daughter cost me. I believe that, O my God, you caused this to purify the too human attachment I had for her natural gifts; for after I had left the Ursulines they changed their mode of diet, and gave what was suitable for the delicacy of my daughter, so that she recovered her health.

CHAPTER III.

As soon as it was known in France that I had gone away I was generally condemned. Those who attacked me most severely were the religious, in the world's sense, and especially Father La Mothe, who wrote me that all orthodox and pious persons, professional or gentlemen, condemned me. To alarm me the more, he told me that my mother-in-law, on whom I relied for the property of my children and for my younger son, had fallen into second childhood, and that I was the cause of it; this was, however, utterly false. Although there were times when my trouble was excessive, I let nothing of it be seen outwardly. I shut myself up as much as I could, and there I allowed myself to be penetrated by the pain, which appeared to me very profound. I bore it very passively, without being able, or even wishing, to alleviate it; on the contrary, my pleasure was to allow myself to be devoured, without even wishing to understand it. This pain was as peaceable as it was penetrating. Once I desired to open the New Testament to console myself, but I was interiorly hindered; so that I remained in silence, without doing anything, allowing myself to be devoured by the pain. It appeared to me that I then commenced to bear troubles in a divine manner, and that from this time forward, without any sentiment, the soul could be at the same time very happy and very pained, very afflicted and beatified. It was not

at all in the same way I had borne my first griefs, nor as I had borne the death of my father. For then the soul was buried in peace, and in a peace that was delightful, but she was not delivered over to pain; what she suffered was only a shock to nature, a weight of delightful pain. Here it is quite different; the same soul is delivered entirely to suffering, and she bears it with a divine strength; and this strength causes the soul to be divided without division from her entire self, so that her unchangeable happiness does not prevent the most severe suffering. But these sufferings are impressed on her by God himself as in Jesus Christ; he suffered as God and man; he suffered in the strength of a God and in the weakness of a man; he was a blessed God and a Man of sufferings; in short, God-Man, suffering and rejoicing, without the beatitude diminishing anything of the pain, or the pain interrupting or altering the perfect beatitude.

I answered all the violent letters they wrote me according to the interior spirit's dictates, and my answers were found very suitable; they were even much appreciated, so that, God allowing, the complaints and thunders soon changed into praise. Father La Mothe seemed to change his mind, and even to esteem me, but this did not last long: self-interest was what made him act so; but when he found that an annuity, which he fancied I would give him, was not provided, he suddenly changed. Sister Garnier from the first changed, and declared herself against me; whether it was merely a pretence or a real change. As to my body and my health, I took no trouble about it. You gave me, my God, too much grace, for I have been two months without almost any sleep, and the food which we had was little suited to support me. The meat they served us was rotten and full of maggots, for in that country the meat was killed on Thursday for use on Friday and Saturday, and owing to the great heat, it was decayed by Sunday; so that what I once would have looked at with

horror was my food. Nothing afflicted me then, for in giving me life you had given me capacity for everything. It seems to me I could do anything, without the necessity of doing it. I could do nothing, without at all minding. It is in you, O my God, that one recovers with increase all one has lost for you.

That intellect which I once thought I had lost in a strange stupidity, was restored to me with inconceivable additions. I was astonished at it myself, and I found that there was nothing for which it was not able, and in which it did not succeed. Those who saw me said I had a prodigious intellect. I knew well that I had but little intellect, but that in God my mind had taken a quality which before it was without. I experienced, it seemed to me, something of the state in which the apostles were after having received the Holy Spirit. I knew, I understood, I comprehended, I was capable of everything, and I did not know where I had acquired this intellect, this knowledge, this intelligence, this power, this facility, nor whence it had come to me. I experienced that I had all kinds of treasures, and that I was not in want of anything whatever; but I did not know whence it was come to me. I recollected that fine passage of Wisdom, which says, "All riches are come to me with her." When Jesus Christ, eternal Wisdom, is formed in the soul after the death of the sinful man, Adam, and this soul is truly entered into newness of life, she finds that in Jesus Christ, eternal Wisdom, all riches are communicated to her.

Some time after my arrival at Gex the Bishop of Geneva came to see us. I spoke to him with the openness and impetuosity of the Spirit which guided me. He was so convinced of the Spirit of God in me that he could not refrain from saying so. He was even affected and touched by it, opened his heart to me about what God desired of him, and how he had been turned aside from fidelity and grace; for he is a good prelate, and it is the greatest pity

in the world that he is so weak in allowing himself to be led by others. When I have spoken to him, he always entered into what I said, acknowledging that what I said had the character of truth; and this could not be otherwise, since it was the Spirit of truth that made me speak to him, without which I was only a stupid creature; but as soon as the people who wished to rule him and could not endure any good that did not come from themselves, spoke to him, he allowed himself to be influenced against the truth. It is this weakness, joined to some others, which has hindered him from doing all the good in his diocese that otherwise he would have done. After I had spoken to him he told me that he had had it in mind to give me as director Father La Combe; that he was a man enlightened of God, who understood well the ways of the spirit, and had a singular gift for calming souls—these are his own words—that he had even told him, the Bishop, many things regarding himself, which he knew to be very true, since he felt in himself what the Father said to him. I had great joy that the Bishop of Geneva gave him to me as director, seeing that thereby the external authority was joined to the grace which seemed already to have given him to me by that union and effusion of supernatural grace.

The wakefulness and fatigues, together with the indifferent climate of this country, caused me a great pulmonary inflammation, with fever and a retention in the stomach of all the water I drank, which caused me violent pains. The doctors thought me in danger, for besides that, I had taken many remedies which I did not pass off. You permitted, O my God, this malady doubtless both as an exercise for my patience (if that can be called patience which costs nothing) and to glorify yourself in the striking miracle which you performed through your servant. As I was very weak, I could not raise myself in the bed without falling in a faint; and I could not remain in bed, for I was

bursting from the waters and remedies I could not get rid of. God allowed that the Sisters neglected me utterly, particularly the one in charge of the housekeeping, who did not give me what was necessary for my life. I had not a shilling to provide for myself, for I had reserved nothing, and the Sisters received all the money which came to me from France—a very large sum. Thus I had the advantage of practising a little poverty, and being in want with those to whom I had given everything.

They wrote to Father La Combe to come and take my confession. He very charitably walked all night, although he had eight long leagues; but he used always to travel so, imitating in this, as in everything else, our Lord Jesus Christ. As soon as he entered the house, without my knowing it, my pains were alleviated. And when he came into my room and blessed me, with his hands on my head, I was perfectly cured, and I evacuated all the water, so that I was able to go to the Mass. The doctors were so surprised that they did not know how to account for my cure; for, being Protestants, they were unable to recognize a miracle. They said it was madness, that my sickness was in the imagination, and a hundred absurdities, such as might be expected from people otherwise vexed by the knowledge that we had come to withdraw from error those who were willing.

A violent cough, however, remained, and those Sisters of themselves told me to go to my daughter, and take milk for a fortnight, after which I might return. As soon as I set out, Father La Combe, who was returning and was in the same boat, said to me, "Let your cough cease." It at once stopped, and although a furious gale came down upon the lake which made me vomit, I coughed no more at all. This storm became so violent that the waves were on the point of capsizing the boat. Father La Combe made the sign of the cross over the waves, and although the billows became more disturbed, they no longer came near, but

broke more than a foot distant from the boat—a fact noticed both by the boatmen and those in the boat, who looked upon him as a saint. Thus I arrived at Tonon at the Ursulines, perfectly cured, so that instead of adopting remedies as I had proposed, I entered on a retreat which I kept for twelve days.

It was then I made perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience; to obey without resistance whatever I believed to be the will of God and the Church, and to honour Jesus Christ, the Child, in the way he wished. I admit that I do not know why nor how I made these vows. I did not find in myself anything to make a vow, and it seemed to me that I was so entirely yours, O my God, that I did not know where to find that which I vowed to you. I understood at the same time that the end of the vow and its consummation was given to my soul as well interiorly as exteriorly; that the soul, being in her entirety God's without reserve, without self-regard, without interest, had the perfect chastity of love, since she was even passed into this same love. It appeared to me that you, O my God, had endowed me with the perfect poverty, by the utter stripping you had effected on me as well interiorly as exteriorly, leaving me nothing of "the own." As to obedience, my will was so entirely lost in yours, that not only it found no resistance, but it had not even a repugnance; the same was its condition as regards the Church. And as to honouring the Childhood of Jesus Christ, I did not know by what means; for that which was proposed to me did not depend on me, but on you, O my God; and it appeared to me that the honour which I paid him was to bear himself in his states. I, however, made all these vows because I was told to make them, and I followed without choice, without inclination, and without repugnance, what I was told to do; and you have drawn from it your glory in a manner known to you alone, the effect of which soon appeared; for you took a new possession

of my exterior, to make me the plaything of your providence, as you have since done. You despoiled me of my riches by a new poverty, and you deprived me of dwelling or place on earth, so that I have not where to rest my head. As to obedience, you made me practise it at one time, as will be seen, with the submissiveness of a child; but also how much have you obeyed me yourself; or rather, you, O my God, have rendered my wills wonderful, causing them to pass into you. I seem to understand clearly enough the meaning of that passage of David, "You have made my wills marvellous." This is meant literally of David in Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ, though Son of David after the flesh, was Son of God by his eternal generation; being Son of God, he had only a single will, which is God. This did not hinder his having his human will also, but so lost in the divine that it was entirely at one with it; and this will is the end of all things, and that which works miracles, as Jesus Christ says, speaking as man, "So it is, my Father, because you have willed it." But besides this sense, David himself experienced that which it seems to me I experience, O my God, by your grace, which is, that when by the destruction of ourselves we are passed into God, and returned to our source, our will is made one with that of God, according to the prayer of Jesus Christ, the effect of which the soul experiences: "My Father, that they all may be one, as we are one; that they all may be perfected in one;" which takes place by the loss of the soul in God, when all becomes one in unity of principle—the end for which we are created. In this unity the will of the soul so transforms itself into that of God as only to will that which God causes it to will, or rather, what he himself wills. Oh, it is then that this will is made wonderful, as well because it is made the will of God, the greatest of wonders, and its end, as that it works wonders in God; where, as soon as God causes it to will anything, since it is he who wills in it, this

will has its effect; hardly has it willed, and the thing is done.

It will be said, But why so many overthrows, so many cruelties inflicted by creatures on these persons? If they have so much power, they should deliver themselves from them. They do not feel even the will to be delivered from them; and if they did, and it was not answered, it would be a will of the flesh, or the will of the human being, not the will of God. For although the soul be altogether lost in God, there is an animal will which the soul well knows to be no true will, but an instinct of the brute, which pursues what is agreeable to it, and flies from what gives it pain; but as to will, that is a different thing, and so little of it has the soul that if you ask her, What do you wish? she would leave God decide for her; and though one should cut her into a thousand pieces, she could only say, "I consent, if it is the will of God."

As to the Church, what have you not given me for her in that which you have caused me to write? Have you not even communicated to me in a singular manner her spirit—a spirit holy and indivisible, a motive spirit, a spirit of truth, a spirit simple and upright?

And as to that of the Holy Child Jesus, good God, to what a degree have I experienced its effects! Have you not placed me in a state of wonderful childishness? And have I not borne it in a singular manner? To honour Jesus, the Child, was for me to bear the Child Jesus Christ as he has willed me to bear him many times, and many of his states, as will be seen in the sequel. This digression will be of no small use for the remainder of what I have to write.

I used to get up every night at midnight, and I had no need of an alarum, for by your goodness, O my God, as long as you desired it of me, I always woke sufficiently before midnight, to be up at that hour; and when through distrust or thoughtlessness I had set my alarum in the

morning, I was never awakened. This led me to abandon myself more to your guidance, O my God, for I saw you had over me the care of a father and a husband. When I had any indisposition, and my body needed rest, you used not to awake me; but at that time, even sleeping, I felt a singular possession of you. For some years I had only a half sleep; my soul was awake to you with the more force as sleep seemed to withdraw her attention from everything else. Our Lord also made known to many persons that he destined me to be the mother of a great people, but a people simple and childlike. They understood these intimations literally, and thought that it related to some new foundation or society; but it appears to me that it means nothing but the persons whom God has willed I should afterwards gain for him, and to whom he has in his goodness willed that I should act as a mother, giving them the same union with me that children have with a mother, but a union much more strong and more inward, and giving me for them all that was necessary, that they might walk in the way by which God was guiding them, as I shall explain hereafter, when I speak of this state of maternity.

CHAPTER IV.

Before speaking of what remains for me to write (which, if I had anything of my natural selfhood, I would gladly suppress, as well owing to the difficulty of explaining myself, as that there are few souls able to appreciate a course of guidance so little known and so little understood that I have never read of anything like it) I will yet say something of the inner disposition I was then in, as far as I can make it intelligible—a matter of no small difficulty owing to its extreme simplicity. If this is of use to you, who desire to be among the number of my children; and if it is useful to my children in more thoroughly destroying self, and in leading them to allow God to glorify himself in them in his manner, not in theirs, I shall find my trouble well repaid; and if there is anything which they do not understand, let them truly die to themselves, and they will soon have a more powerful experience of it than I could give them; for description never does come up to experience. After I had emerged from the state of abjectness of which I have spoken, I understood how a state, which had appeared to me so criminal, and which was so only in my idea, had purified my soul, taking from her all selfhood. As soon as my mind was enlightened on the truth of that state, my soul was placed in an immense freedom. I recognized the difference between the graces which had preceded that state and those which

have succeeded it. Previously everything was collected and concentrated within, and I possessed God in my centre, and in the inmost of my soul; but afterwards I was possessed of him in a manner so vast, so pure, and so immense, that nothing can equal it. Formerly God was, as it were, enclosed in me, and I was united to him in my centre; but afterwards I was submerged in the sea itself. Before, the thoughts and views were lost, but in a way perceived, though very slightly; the soul let them go sometimes, which is yet an act; but afterwards they had, as it were, entirely disappeared, in a manner so bare, so pure, so lost that the soul had no action of her own, however simple and delicate—at least, which could rise into consciousness.

The powers and the senses are purified in a wonderful manner: the mind is of a surprising limpidity; I was sometimes astonished that not a thought appeared in it. That imagination, once so troublesome, gives no longer any trouble whatsoever; there is no longer embarrassment, nor disturbance, nor occupation of the memory; everything is naked and limpid, and God makes the soul know and think whatever he pleases, without irrelevant species any longer inconveniencing the mind. This is of very great purity. It is the same in the case of the will, which, being totally dead to all its spiritual appetites, has no longer any taste, leaning, or tendency; it remains empty of all human inclination, natural or spiritual. It is this which enables God to bend it where he pleases, and how he pleases.

This vastness, which is not bounded by anything whatever, however simple, increases day by day, so that it seems that this soul, in sharing the qualities of her Spouse, shares especially his immensity. Formerly one was, as it were, drawn and shut up within; afterwards I experienced that a hand far more powerful than the first drew me out of myself, and plunged me, without view, or

knowledge, in God, in a way which ravished me; and the more distant the soul thought herself from this state, the more ravished she was to find it. How sweet, then, is it to this soul, which is rather comprehended of it than comprehends it.

At the commencement of this state there happened to me a thing which I do not know how to name. My prayer was of a nakedness and simplicity beyond conception, and yet of an inexplicable depth. I was, as it were, held up high out of myself, and what particularly surprised me was, that my head felt as if violently lifted up. This was all the more unusual, because formerly its first movements were quite in the opposite direction, since I was quite concentrated. I believe that God wished me to have this experience at the commencement of the new life (which was so powerful, although very sweet, that my body fainted away)—I believe, I say, that our Lord permitted that to enable me to understand for the benefit of other souls, this passage of the soul into God; for after it had lasted with me some days, I no longer perceived this violence, although I have always since experienced that my prayer is no longer in me in the way that I formerly experienced it, when I used to say, "I carry in me the prayer that I offer to the God of my life." It will be difficult to understand what I wish to say without having experienced it. When I went to confession, I could hardly speak, not from internal recollection, nor as I have described when I was at the commencement; it was like an immersion. This is a word which I use without knowing if it is suitable. I was plunged down and raised up. Once, when at confession to Father La Combe at Gex, I felt this elevation so strong that I thought my body was about to be raised from the earth. Our Lord made use of it to let me grasp what that flight of the spirit is, which raised the bodies of some saints to a great height, and the difference there is between

that and the loss of the soul in God. Before going on with the events which happened to me, I will say something about this.

The flight of the spirit is far more noble than the simple fainting away of ecstasy, although almost always the flight of the spirit causes weakness to the body, God drawing powerfully the soul, not in her centre, but in himself, in order to make her pass there, this soul not being yet sufficiently purified to pass into God without violence; a thing which can be brought about only after the mystical decease, where the soul veritably goes out of herself to pass into her Divine Object, which I call decease—that is to say, passage from one thing to another. That is indeed the happy Passover for the soul, and passage into the promised land. This spirit, which is created to be united to its principle, has such an impulse to return to it, that if it was not stopped by a continual miracle, it would, by its motive-power, carry the body wherever it wished, owing to its impetuosity and its nobleness; but God has given it an earthly body as counter-weight. This spirit, then, created to be immediately united to its principle, feeling itself drawn by its Divine Object, tends to it with extreme violence, so that God, suspending for a time the power which the body has to keep back the spirit, it follows with impetuosity; but as it is not sufficiently purified to pass into God, it returns gradually to itself, and the body reassuming gradually its quality, it returns to earth. The saints who have been most perfected in this life have not had anything of all this, and even some of the saints to whom it has happened, have lost it at the close of their lives, remaining simple and common like others, because they had in reality and permanence that which formerly they had merely as samples during the elevation of their body.

It is, then, certain that the soul, by death to herself, passes into her Divine Object, and this is what I

experienced; and I found that the further I advanced, the more my spirit lost itself in its Sovereign, who drew it to him more and more; and he willed at the commencement I should know this for the benefit of others, not for myself. Daily this spirit lost itself more, and its principle attracted it continually more, until, owing to this drawing, it was so withdrawn from itself, that it lost itself completely from view, and no longer perceived itself. But the same Love which drew it to him brightened and purified it, that it might pass into him and be then transformed into himself. In the commencement of the new life I saw clearly that the soul was united to God without means or medium, but she was not completely lost in him. Each day she lost herself there, as one sees a river which loses itself in the ocean, at first unite with it, then flow into it, but so that the river may for a time be distinguished from the sea, until at last it gradually is transformed into the sea itself, which, while little by little communicating its qualities, changes it so entirely into itself, that it becomes one and the same sea with it. I have experienced the same in my soul, how God gradually makes her lose herself in him, and communicates to her his qualities, drawing her away from everything she has of the "*own*."

At the commencement of the new life I committed faults; and these faults, which would not have appeared anything, on the contrary, would have been virtues in a different state, were little assertions of the selfhood, light, and on the surface—a haste, a slight emotion, but as slight as possible. I experienced at once that this raised a partition between God and my soul; it was like a speck of dust, but as this was only on the surface, the partition appeared to me finer than a spider's web. And then he willed me to go clear myself from it by confession, or else he himself purified me from it; and I saw clearly this partition, which was like a veil that did not break the union nor alter it, but covered it, and this slight partition

made noticeable more of distinction between the Spouse and the Bride. I do not know if I make myself understood. The soul suffered from this little partition, but in a peaceable manner; she saw that she could indeed erect the partition, but could not take it away. Little by little all partition was lost, and the fewer and more delicate the partitions, the more union was lost in Unity, until at last there was only one where there had been two, and the soul lost herself so utterly that she could no longer distinguish herself from her Beloved, nor see him. It is that which caused her trouble in the sequel. As to her confession, she was astonished that she knew not what to say, that she no longer found anything; although one would think she must commit more faults, owing to the liberty she had to speak, talk, and act, which formerly she had not; but that no longer troubles her, nor is any more regarded as a fault. An inconceivable innocence, unknown and incomprehensible to those who are still shut up in themselves, is her life. But I must resume where I have broken off.

Before I arrived at this state, being at the confessional, I felt myself so powerfully drawn out of myself, that my body became faint, the perspiration covered my face. I sat down, but perceiving that this increased in a delicious manner—very pure and spiritual, however—I withdrew. A shudder passed through me from head to foot; I could neither speak nor eat the whole day, and from that moment, or rather, that operation, which lasted three days, my soul was much more lost in her Divine Object, although not altogether. The joy the soul then possessed is so great, that she experiences the words of the royal prophet: "All those who are in you, Lord, are like persons ravished with joy," but the joy is that it appears to the soul that it will never be taken away. It seems that those words of our Lord are addressed to her: "None shall take away your joy." She is, as it were, plunged

in a river of peace, and is so penetrated with it that she is all peace. Her prayer is continual; nothing can prevent her praying and loving. She experiences very really these words: "I sleep, but my heart is awake," for she experiences that sleep does not prevent the Spirit praying within her. O ineffable happiness, who would ever have thought that a poor soul, which believed herself in the utmost need, could find in need itself a happiness equal to that she tastes, without tasting it! It is not that she does not sometimes experience troubles, which take away even the appetite, and the body, which is not accustomed to this, is quite languishing; but this trouble is so sweet and peaceable that one cannot distinguish whether it is a sweet trouble, or an afflictive sweetness. Daily the soul perceives her capacity increase and grow larger, and what astonishes her is that the light of this state augments the state which she previously possessed without recognizing it.

O happy poverty, happy loss, happy nothingness, which gives no less than God himself in his immensity, no longer adjusted in the limited manner of the creature, by whom he is no longer possessed, but which he entirely possesses, drawing it continually more from itself to sink it in him! The soul then knows that all the states of visions, revelations, assurances are rather obstacles than aids to this state, which is far above them; for the soul accustomed to supports has difficulty in losing them, and she cannot reach this without that loss. Then all intelligence is given without other view than simple faith. And it is here are found true those words of John of the Cross: "When I have not wished to possess anything"—through self-love—"everything has been given me without going after it." O happy rotting of the grain of wheat, which makes it produce fruit a hundred-fold! The soul is then so passive both as regards goods and ills that it is astonishing. Although before she seemed to be so to a great degree, it

is not here the same, for here she is strengthened in a surprising manner. She receives the one and the other without any movement of her own, letting them flow by and perish as they come. I do not know if I speak correctly; for that passes as if it did not touch her at all.

After I made my retreat at the Ursulines of Tonon, I returned by Geneva, and having no other means of travelling, the Resident lent me a horse. As I did not know how to use this means of conveyance, I made some difficulty, but they assured me it was very gentle, and I resolved to make the attempt. There was a kind of farrier present, who, regarding me with haggard eyes, as soon as I was mounted, struck the horse upon the croup. It made a frightful bound, and threw me to the earth with such force that they thought I was killed. I fell upon my temple. I ought certainly to have been killed, for the bone of the cheek was broken in two, and I had two teeth knocked in. In my fall I was upheld by an invisible hand. Nevertheless, I remounted the best I could on another horse which they gave me to finish my journey, and my servant man placed himself beside me to hold me up. But a surprising thing happened; while on the road something was forcibly pushing me on the same side on which I had fallen off, and although I leant with all my strength to the other side, and I was held on firmly enough, I could not resist what was pushing me. I was every moment in danger of being killed, but quite content to see myself at the mercy of the divine providence. I at once understood it was the Devil, but I was quite confident he could do me no hurt but what my Master allowed him.

My relatives, after a slight attempt, left me in quiet at Gex. People even began to esteem me much, and as my miraculous cure had been written about to Paris, it made a great sensation. You permitted it, O my God, that I might fall the lower from the height to which you had elevated me. Almost all the persons then in repute for

holiness wrote to me. The Demoiselles of Paris, who were renowned for good works, congratulated me. I received letters from Madame de Lamoignon and another lady, who was so pleased with my answer that she sent one hundred pistoles for our House, and told me when we were in want of money I had only to write to her, and she would send me whatever I wanted. At Paris they talked only of the sacrifice I had made. All approved and praised my action, so that they wanted an account of it printed, together with the miracle which had taken place. I do not know who prevented it. From this we may see the inconstancy of the creature; for the very journey which then brought me such praises is the same which furnished the pretext for such a strange condemnation.

CHAPTER V.

My relatives made no effort to bring me back. The first thing they proposed to me a month after my arrival at Gex was not only to relinquish my wardship, but also to give all my property to my children, reserving only an annuity for myself. Although the proposal, coming from persons who, as the sequel will show, had regard only for their own interests, ought to have appeared to me harsh, it by no means did so. I had neither friends nor advice. I did not know whom to ask as to the mode of effecting it; for as to willingness, I was perfectly ready. It seemed to me I had thus the means of accomplishing my vow and my extreme desire to be conformed to Jesus Christ, poor, naked, stripped of everything. It was necessary to send a power of attorney, which they had drawn up. Clauses which were inserted Our Lord did not allow me to notice, and I, believing it honestly prepared, signed. It was provided that when my children all died, I should not inherit my own property, but it was to pass to collaterals. There were other matters also equally to my disadvantage. Although what I reserved for myself was enough for the place where I then was, it is hardly sufficient to support me elsewhere. I gave up then my property, that I might be conformed to Jesus Christ, with more joy than those who demanded it of me could have from its possession. It is a thing which I have never either repented or regretted.

O my God, what pleasure to lose all and to quit all for you! "Love of poverty, kingdom of tranquillity."

I have forgotten to say that at the close of the state of wretchedness and trouble, when I was ready to enter on newness of life, our Lord enlightened me to see that the external crosses came from him; so that I could not have any grudge against the persons who brought them on me—on the contrary, I felt a tender compassion for them, and I was more troubled from those I caused them innocently than at those they caused me. I had experienced something of the kind at intervals during my husband's life; but it was not established in me as then, and as it has since been. I saw that those persons feared you too much, my God, to treat me as they did, if they had known it. I saw your hand therein, and I felt the trouble they suffered from the contrariety of their temper. After the accident which befell me in my fall from the horse, which so injured me that I spat blood that came from the brain, and for eight days it also came from my nose (which, through your goodness, O my God, had no permanent consequence), the Devil commenced to declare himself more openly my enemy, and to break loose against me. One night when I least thought of it, he presented himself to my mind in a way so monstrous and terrifying that nothing could be more so; only a face was visible by means of a bluish light. I do not know if the flame itself composed this horrible face, for it was so mixed up and passed so quickly that I could not well distinguish. My soul remained unmoved and untroubled, understanding that it was the Devil. The senses were slightly alarmed, but as for the soul, she remained firm and immovable, without any motion of her own, and did not even allow the body to make the sign of the cross; because although this would have driven away the Devil for the moment, it would have shown I was afraid of him, or that I knew it was he. This way of despising is far more distasteful to him, so he never

again appeared in that way; but he got into such a rage that every night, as I got up at midnight, he used to come at that hour and made a terrible knocking in my room. When I lay down it was still worse; he shook my bed for a quarter of an hour at a time. Then he used to go at the paper window-panes, which he broke; and every morning as long as this lasted the panes were found broken. I had no fear, not even a shiver in the senses. I used to get up and light my candle at a lamp which I kept lighted in my room, for I had accepted the office of sacristan, and the duty of waking the Sisters at the hour they should rise, ringing the "Aves;" and in spite of my indisposition I never failed to wake them or to be the first at all the duties. I made use of my little light to look all over the room, and at the window-panes at the very time the Devil was knocking more loudly than usual. As he saw I was not afraid of anything, he went off on a sudden, and did not attack me any more in person; but he did so by stirring up men against me, and this succeeded better for him, for he found them ready to do what he suggested, and to do it with the more zeal as they regarded it as a good deed.

One of the Sisters I had brought, who was a very beautiful girl, became connected with an ecclesiastic who had authority in this place. He inspired her from the first with an aversion to me, judging well that if she had confidence in me, I would not advise her to allow his frequent visits. She undertook a retreat. I begged her not to enter on it until I was there; for it was the time that I was making my own. This ecclesiastic was very glad to let her make it, in order to get entirely into her confidence, for it would have served as a pretext for his frequent visits. The Bishop of Geneva had assigned Father La Combe as director of our House without my asking, so that it came purely from God. I then begged this girl, as Father La Combe was to conduct the retreats,

she would wait for him. As I was already commencing to get an influence over her mind, she yielded to me against her own inclination, which was willing enough to make it under that ecclesiastic. I began to speak to her of prayer, and to cause her to offer it. Our Lord therein gave her such blessing that this girl, in other respects very discreet, gave herself to God in earnest and with all her heart. The retreat completed the victory. Now, as she apparently recognized that to connect herself with that ecclesiastic was something imperfect, she was more reserved. This much displeased the worthy ecclesiastic, and embittered him against Father La Combe and me, and this was the source of all the persecutions that befell me. The noise in my room ceased when that commenced. This ecclesiastic, who heard confession in the House, no longer regarded me with a good eye. He began secretly to speak of me with scorn. I knew it, but said nothing to him, and did not for that cease confessing to him. There came to see him a certain monk who hated Father La Combe in consequence of his regularity. They formed an alliance, and decided that they must drive me out of the House, and make themselves masters of it. They set in motion for this purpose all the means they could find. The ecclesiastic, seeing himself supported, no longer kept any bounds. They said I was stupid, that I had a silly air. They could judge of my mind only by my air, for I hardly spoke to them. This went so far that they made a sermon out of my confession, and it circulated through the whole diocese. They said that some persons were so frightfully proud that in place of confessing gross sins, they confessed only peccadillos; then they gave a detail, word for word, of everything I had confessed. I am willing to believe that this worthy priest was accustomed only to the confessions of peasants, for the faults of a person in the state which I was in astonished him, and made him regard what were really faults in me, as fanciful; for otherwise

assuredly he would not have acted in such a manner. I still accused myself, however, of a sin of my past life, but this did not content him, and I know he made a great commotion because I did not accuse myself of more notable sins. I wrote to Father La Combe to know if I could confess past sins as present, in order to satisfy this worthy man. He told me, no; and that I should take great care not to confess them except as passed, and that in confession the utmost sincerity was needed.

My manner of life was such that I had very few opportunities of committing faults, for I took not the least part in the affairs of the House, leaving the Sisters to dispose of the funds as they pleased, persuaded as I was that they made good use of them. A little after coming there I received a sum of eighteen hundred livres, which one of my friends lent me to finish our furnishing, and which I repaid on settling my property; they received this also. They managed as well as they could, and were good economists, but without experience, and they were without what was necessary for an establishment. I took no part in anything, except to perform my duty of sacristan, and to assist at all the offices, which we repeated—the Sister I have spoken of and I; there were only us two to repeat the offices, and we did it with as much exactitude as if we were many, and, with exception of meals and recreation, I remained all day shut up in my room. I let them receive and return all visits, and took no share therein. All I did was to speak an occasional word to those who were in seclusion, with a view to becoming Catholics; and our Lord gave such a blessing to what I said that we saw some whom previously they knew not what to do with, relish God in a wonderful manner, and acquire an incredible affection for remaining in the church. Living in this way, I had no opportunities for sinning.

This worthy gentleman gained over one of the Sisters, who had a weak mind—it was the one who was house-

keeper — whereby they commenced causing me a few crosses. Some days before these persecutions were set on foot, at midnight, being with our Lord, I said to him: "It seems to me you promised me here only crosses; where are they, then? I do not see them." Hardly had this thought occurred to me when there came upon me such a number that, so to speak, they were tumbling one over the other.

Before continuing, I will mention that immediately on our arrival the Bishop of Geneva was so kind as to allow us to have the Holy Sacrament at our House. As soon as ever our chapel was in condition for it, we had this advantage; and as we wished to place it the day of the Holy Cross, which was our *fête*—and which name I had taken without knowing why, to avoid recognition—the chapel not being yet sufficiently closed, for three nights I guarded the Holy Sacrament, lying by myself in the chapel. I never passed any with greater satisfaction. I had a movement to pray for that unfortunate town which was the object of my tenderness, and which was the occasion of all my disgraces. I had confidence, as I have still more at present, that it would be one day, O my Divine Spouse, the throne of your mercies. I cannot doubt it.

The Bishop, knowing I loved the Holy Child Jesus, sent me to place in our little chamber a simple image of paper of a Child Jesus, who held in his hands crosses for distribution. On receiving it, I was struck with the thought that he came with the hands full to distribute them to me, and I received them with all my heart. For you have always shown this kindness to me, my God, never to give me extraordinary crosses without first having obtained my consent—not to the nature of the cross in itself, but for the suffering an extraordinary cross which was proposed to me; and at the same time those words said of Jesus Christ, my divine model, came to my mind: "For the joy set before him, endured the cross." It appeared to me

then, O my God, that I was offered the choice either of the approbation of men and success, together with the assurance of my salvation; or of the cross, wretchedness, rejection, persecution from all creatures, even privation of all creatures, even privation of all assurance of salvation, and nothing but **YOUR GLORY ALONE.** O Love, the latter was the object of my choice and of my tender inclination. Yes; "for the joy set before him, he endured the cross." I prostrated myself, my face to the earth, for a long time, as it were, to receive all your blows, O amiable justice of my God, with which from that moment I felt myself inflamed. All self-interest having perished and been destroyed in me, nothing remained but the interest of your divine justice. Strike, O divine Justice, who have not spared Jesus Christ, God-Man, who gave himself up to death to satisfy you. Him alone you found worthy of you, and in him you still find hearts which are fitted for you to exercise your loving cruelties.

A few days after my arrival at Gex by night I saw in a dream (but a mysterious dream, for I perfectly well distinguished it) Father La Combe fixed on a great cross of extraordinary height. He was naked in the way our Lord is pictured. I saw an amazing crowd who covered me with confusion and cast upon me the ignominy of his punishment. It seemed he suffered more pain than I, but I more reproaches than he. This surprised me the more, because, having seen him only once, I could not imagine what it meant. But I have indeed seen it accomplished. At the same time that I saw him thus fixed to the cross, these words were impressed on me: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered;" and these others, "I have specially prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not. Satan has desired to sift thee."

This worthy ecclesiastic, as I have said, gained over that girl, and afterwards the Superior. I was of a very delicate constitution, and, however willing, that did not

give bodily strength. I had two maids to serve me, but as the community needed one to cook and the other to attend the gate, and for other duties, I gave them up, thinking that they would not be unwilling I should have their services sometimes; since I besides allowed them to receive the whole of my income; for immediately after my settlement was made they received in advance the half of my annuity. I believed then that they would consent to these two maids rendering me the services which I could not perform myself. But our Lord permitted that they were unwilling. The church was very large to sweep. I had to sweep it by myself. Oftentimes I have fainted over the broom, and remained in corners utterly exhausted. This obliged me to ask sometimes that they would have it done by the grown peasant girls, who were there as New Catholics, and at last they had the kindness to allow this. What troubled me most was that I had never done washing, and it was necessary for me to wash all the linen of the sacristry. I took one of the maids I had brought to do it; for I had spoiled everything. These good Sisters came and dragged her out of my room by the arm, telling her to mind her own business. I did not appear to notice it, and in whatever manner they behaved I made no remonstrance. So the worthy ecclesiastic saw that I would not withdraw for all this. Besides, the other Sister attached herself more and more to our Lord through means of prayer, and contracted great friendship for me. This increased the ecclesiastic's trouble so that he could not keep in his rage against me. One day he thought proper to bring a very doubtful book to this girl. I handed it back to him, after having opened it, urgently requesting him not to bring books of this kind into the House. He was extremely offended, and set out for Annecy to make mischief.

CHAPTER VI.

Up to that time the Bishop of Geneva had shown me much esteem and kindness, and therefore this man cleverly took him off his guard. He urged upon the Prelate that, in order to make certain of me for that House, he ought to compel me to give up to it the little money I had reserved for myself, and to bind me by making me the Superior. He knew well that I would never bind myself there, and that, my vocation being elsewhere, I would never give my capital to that House, where I had come only as a visitor; and that I would not be Superior, as I had many times already declared; and that even should I bind myself, it would be only on the condition that this should not be. I believe, indeed, that this objection to being Superior was a remnant of the selfhood, coloured with humility. The Bishop of Geneva did not in the least penetrate the intentions of that ecclesiastic, who was called in the country the little Bishop, because of the ascendency he had acquired over the mind of the Bishop of Geneva. He thought it was through affection for me, and zeal for this House, that this man desired to bind me to it; consequently he at once fell in with the proposal, resolving to carry it through at whatever price. The ecclesiastic, seeing he had so well succeeded, no longer kept any bounds as regarded me. He commenced by stopping the letters I wrote Father La Combe. Afterwards he intercepted all

those I wrote to Paris, and those which were written to me, in order to influence people's minds as he pleased, and that I might not be able either to know it, or defend myself, or tell how I was being treated. One of the maids I had brought wished to return, not being able to remain in that place, so that only one remained for me, and she was weak and too much occupied to aid me in many things I had need of. As Father La Combe was coming for the retreat, I thought he would soften the bitter spirit of this man, and would advise me. Meanwhile the proposal of binding myself, and becoming Superior, was made to me. I answered, that as for binding myself, it was impossible, my vocation being elsewhere, and for the Superiorship, I could not be a Superior before being a novice; that all of them had completed two years of novitiate before binding themselves, and when I had done as much, I would see what God inspired me. The Superior answered me sharply enough, that if I contemplated quitting them some day, I might do it at once. However, I did not withdraw for this; I behaved still in my usual way, but I saw the heavens grow dark gradually, and storms come from every side. The Superior meanwhile affected a more gentle air; she declared she also wished to go to Geneva, that I should not bind myself, but should promise to take her with me if I went there. She asked me whether I was not bound in some particular matter for Geneva. She wished to sound me, to see if I had not some plan, or perhaps some engagement under vow; but as I had not the advice of Father La Combe, I did not say anything to her. She professed even much confidence in me, and seemed united to me. As I am very frank, and our Lord has given me much uprightness, I believed she was acting in good faith: I even declared to her I was not attracted by the manner of life of the New Catholics, owing to their outside intrigues. I further let her know that certain abjurations and certain shufflings did not please me, because I desired people to be straight-

forward in everything; so that my refusal to sign things which were not true shocked them a little. She let nothing of it appear. She was a worthy person, and did these things only because that ecclesiastic told her it was necessary to act so, to bring the House into credit, and to attract the charity of Paris. I told her that if we acted uprightly God would not fail us; that he would sooner work miracles. I remarked one thing, which was that as soon as one took to this mode of action, so alien from uprightness and sincerity, and even justice, that what one did in the expectation of attracting charity, had the effect, without any one knowing anything of it, that people grew cold, and the charity was checked. O God, is it not you who inspire charity, and is it not sister of truth? How, then, attract it by deception? It must be attracted by confidence in God, and then it becomes extremely liberal; any other mode of behaviour ties it up.

One day after the Superior had communicated, she came to me and told me that our Lord had let her know how dear Father La Combe was to him, and that he was a saint, that she felt herself disposed to make a vow of obedience to him. She appeared to say all this in perfect good faith, and I believe she was then speaking sincerely for she had ups and downs of weakness, which are common enough to our sex, and ought to make us very humble. I told her she should not do this: she said she wished it, and she was about to pronounce the vow. I opposed it strongly, saying that these things should not be done lightly, nor without consulting the person whom one wished to obey, to ascertain if he would accept it. She was satisfied with my reasons, and wrote to Father La Combe all which she said had taken place in her, and how she desired to vow obedience to him, that it was God who urged her to it. Father La Combe answered her, and she showed me the letter. He told her she should never make a vow to obey any man; that he would never be her adviser; that the person who

is suitable at one time is not so at another; that one should remain free, obeying, nevertheless, with love and charity, all the same as if bound by a vow; that as for himself, he had never received such a vow from any one and never would, that it was even forbidden him by their rules: that none the less he would serve her to the best of his ability, and that in a short time he would go to conduct the retreats. She had also told him in that letter that she prayed he would ask our Lord to let her know if he destined her for Geneva, whether she should go with me; that she was content whatever the will of God, only that he should tell her exactly what he knew in these things. He wrote her that on this article he would simply tell her what he thought of it.

It is true that the characteristic of Father La Combe is simplicity and straightforwardness. When he came for the retreats, which was the third and last time he came to Gex, on the first day she spoke to him with much eagerness. She asked him if one day she would be united with me at Geneva. He answered her with his usual candour: "My mother, our Lord has let me know that you will never be established at Geneva; as for the others, I have no light." (She is dead, so that was well verified.) As soon as he made this declaration, she appeared enraged against him and me in a surprising way. She went to find the ecclesiastic, who was in a room with the housekeeper, and they together took measures to compel me either to bind myself or to withdraw. They thought I would rather bind myself than withdraw. And they watched my letters more closely.

The Father preached at her request, which was only to lay a trap for him. He had in the parish made a sermon on charity, which had carried away every one. She asked him for a sermon touching the inner life. He preached one which he had preached at the Visitation at Tonon: "The beauty of the King's daughter comes from

within." He explained what the inner life is, and what it is to act from it as a principle. That ecclesiastic, who was present with one of his confidants, said that it was preached against him, and that it was full of errors. He extracted eight propositions, which the Father had not preached, and after dressing them out as maliciously as he could, he sent them to a friend at Rome, in order, as he said, that they might be examined by the Sacred College and the Inquisition. Although they were very badly drawn up, they, nevertheless, passed as quite sound. His friend told him there was nothing whatever wrong in them. This vexed him, for he is not, as I hear, theologian enough to judge anything for himself. Moreover, he came the next day with surprising anger to Father La Combe, and attacked him, saying he had made the sermon to offend him. The Father drew it from his pocket, and showed him that he had thereon written the dates and the places where he had preached it; so that he was confounded, but not appeased. He became still more angry in the presence of many persons who were assembled there. The Father went on his knees, and in that position listened for half an hour to all the abuse which the ecclesiastic chose to utter. They came to tell me, but I did not choose to have anything to do with all that. The Father, after being treated in this way, said to the ecclesiastic with much sweetness and humility, that he was obliged to go to Annecy for some business of their convent, and that if he desired to send anything to the Bishop, he would take charge of his letters. The other answered for him to wait, that he would write. This good Father had the patience to wait for more than three full hours without hearing anything from him. They came and told me, "Do you know that Father La Combe has not started, but is in the church, where he awaits letters from M——?"—mentioning the priest who had so illtreated him that he even tore from his hands a letter,

which I had just given him for the good hermit I have mentioned. I went to the church to ask him to send the servant who was to accompany him to Annecy to see if the packet of that gentleman was ready; for the day was so far gone that he would have to sleep on the road. This man found mounted a servant of the ecclesiastic, who told him, It is I who am going there. And as he was going in, this same M—— said to another servant, to go as fast as he could so as to reach Annecy before the Father. He had kept him waiting merely to send off a man before him to prejudice the mind of the Bishop; and he sent back word to the Father that he had no letters to give him.

Father La Combe none the less went to Annecy, where he found the Bishop much prejudiced and embittered. He said to him: "My Father, it is absolutely necessary to bind that lady to give what she has to the House at Gex, and to become the Superior." "My lord," answered Father La Combe, "you know what she has herself told you of her vocation both at Paris and in this country, and therefore I do not believe she will consent to bind herself. It is not likely that, having given up everything in the hope of going into Geneva, she should bind herself elsewhere, and thus render it impossible for her to accomplish God's designs for her. She has offered to remain with these good Sisters as a lodger. If they desire to keep her in that capacity she will remain with them; if not, she is resolved to withdraw into some convent until God shall dispose of her otherwise." The Bishop answered: "My Father, I know all that, but at the same time I know she is obedient, and if you so order her, she will surely do it." "It is for this reason, my lord, because she is obedient, that one should be very cautious in the commands one gives her," answered the Father. "It is not likely that I will urge a foreign lady, who has for her whole subsistence merely what she has reserved for herself, to rob herself of that in favour of a House which is not yet founded, and

which, perhaps, never will be founded. If the House happens to fail, or to be no longer useful, on what shall the lady live? Shall she go to the almshouse? In fact, before long this House will be of no use, for there will be no Protestants in France." The Bishop said: "My Father, all these reasons are good for nothing. If you do not cause the lady to do it, I will interdict you." That mode of speaking surprised the Father, who well enough knew the rules of the interdict, as not allowing it in matters of this nature. He said to him: "My lord, I am ready to suffer not only the interdict, but even death rather than do anything against my honour or conscience," and withdrew. He wrote me at the same time everything by an express, that I might take my measures thereon. I had nothing left but to withdraw into a convent, but before doing so I said again to these good Sisters that I was going away; for at the same time I received a letter that the nun to whom I had entrusted my daughter, and who was the one spoke French least corruptly, and was very virtuous, had fallen ill, and that she prayed me to go for a time to my daughter. I showed them the letter, and told them that I wished to withdraw into that community; that if they ceased persecuting me as they were doing, and if Father La Combe was left in quiet—who was deemed the apostle of the country because of the wonderful fruit of his missions—I would return as soon as the mistress of my daughter was recovered. It was my intention to do it. Instead of this, they persecuted me with more violence, and wrote against me to Paris, intercepted all my letters, and sent out libels, where it was said, the person would be recognized by a little cross of wood she wore; as a fact, I had on my neck a little cross from the tomb of St. Francis de Sales.

This ecclesiastic and his friend went through all the places where Father La Combe had held his mission, to decry him and speak against him so violently that a woman

was afraid to say her *Pater* because, she said, she had learned it from him. They made a fearful scandal through the whole country. Father La Combe was not in the country, for the day after my arrival at the Ursulines of Tonon, he set out in the morning to preach the Lent sermons at the Valley of Aosta. He came to say adieu to me, and at the same time told me he would go to Rome, and probably would not return, that his superiors might keep him there, that he was sorry to leave me in a strange country without help, and persecuted by every one. Did not that trouble me? I said to him: "My Father, I am not troubled at it. I use the creatures for God, and by his order; through his mercy I get on very well without them when he withdraws them. I am quite content never to see you again, if such be his will, and to remain under persecution." When he said that to me he did not know it would become so violent as it did. Afterwards he said he set out well pleased to see me in this disposition, and thus went away.

But before going further, I will tell what happened to me previously. As soon as I arrived at the Ursulines, a very old priest, reputed a very holy man, and who for twenty years had not left his solitude, came to see me, and told me he had a vision about me before my arrival. He saw a woman in a boat on the lake, and the Bishop with some of his priests were doing all they could to sink the boat and drown her. This vision lasted more than two hours, troubling his spirit; that sometimes the woman seemed utterly submerged, and was not visible at all, and then, when she seemed lost, suddenly she reappeared. "In short," he said, "for two hours I saw this woman, one moment lost, another out of danger, while all the time the Bishop continued to persecute her. The woman was always equally tranquil, but I never saw her altogether free; from which I conclude the Bishop will persecute you, and will never give it up. Such a one thinks he will

desist, and I come to assure you he will not; he will die while persecuting you, and will not change."

I had an intimate friend, the wife of the Governor, of whom I have spoken in this narrative. When she saw I had given up everything for God, she had a strong desire to follow me. She set herself to arrange everything so as to come and see me, but when she learned of the persecution, she saw there was no sense in her going to a place from which I should be obliged to withdraw, and she died soon after.

CHAPTER VII.

As soon as Father La Combe was gone the persecution became stronger than before. The Bishop still showed me some politeness, as well to see if he could bring me over to his purpose as to gain time for ascertaining how things would go in France, and for prejudicing people against me, always taking care to prevent my receiving any letters. I let but very few be intercepted, and only those which were indispensable. The ecclesiastic and another had open on their table twenty-two letters which did not reach me; and in one of them was a very important power of attorney sent for my signature. This they were obliged to put in a new envelope to send to me. The Bishop wrote to Father La Mothe, and he had little trouble in making him embrace his interests. He was dissatisfied because I had not given him the annuity he expected, as he has many times plainly told me, and he was offended because I did not follow his advice in everything, added to which were some other personal causes. He from the first declared against me. The Bishop, who cared to humour only him, felt strong enough with Father La Mothe on his side, and even made him his confidant, while he circulated the news written by them. The general opinion was that what caused him and his brother to act in this way was the fear that I might cancel the deed of settlement if I returned, and that, having influence and friends,

I might find the means of setting it aside. They were very much mistaken in this; for I never had the thought of loving anything else than the poverty of Jesus Christ. For some time the Father kept terms with me. He wrote me letters addressed to the Bishop; and they so well understood each other that he was the only person whose letters I received. Our Lord gave me very beautiful letters to write to him; but in place of being touched he was irritated at them. I do not think there could be more powerful or more touching.

The Bishop, as I said, kept some terms with me for a time, making me believe that he had consideration for me; but he wrote to people at Paris, and the Sister also wrote to all those pious people from whom I had received letters, in order to prejudice them against me, and to escape the blame that naturally would fall on them for having so shamefully treated a person who had given up everything to devote herself to the service of his diocese; and ill-treated her only after she had stripped herself of her property, and was no longer in a condition to return to France—to avoid, I say, a censure so just they invented every kind of false and fabulous stories. Besides that I was unable to make known the truth in France, our Lord inspired me to suffer everything without justifying myself. I did this with Father La Mothe. As I saw he twisted everything, and showed himself more bitter than the Bishop, I ceased to write to him. On the other hand, the New Catholics, who are in great credit, blamed and condemned me to excuse their violence. People saw only condemnation and accusation without any justification. It was not difficult to blame and cast imputations on one who did not defend herself.

I was in this convent. I had seen Father La Combe only on the occasions I have mentioned. Nevertheless, they circulated a story that I was running about with him; that he had taken me driving in a carriage at Geneva, that

the carriage was overturned, and a hundred malicious absurdities. Father La Mothe himself retailed all this, whether he thought it true or otherwise. Yet even had he believed these things true, he was bound to conceal them. But what do I say, my God, or where am I wandering? Was it not you who allowed him and his brother to be impressed with these things, that believing them true they might be able to repeat them without scruple? As for his brother, I believe he accepted them only on the report of Father La Mothe, who made him believe them true. Father La Mothe further retailed that I had been on horseback behind Father La Combe, which is the more false, in that I have never sat in that way.

All these calumnies turned to ridicule persons who were previously esteemed saints. It is here we must admire the dealings of God: for what cause had I given for them to speak in this way? I was in a convent a hundred and fifty leagues distant from Father La Combe, and nevertheless they made out the most disgraceful stories of him and of me.

I did not know that things were pushed so far and so violently, for I had no news. I saw I did not receive letters from any quarter, neither from my friends nor from persons of piety; but as I knew all my letters were intercepted, I was not surprised at it. I lived in this House with my daughter very peacefully, and it was a very great providence, for my daughter no longer could speak French; among the little girls of the mountains she had acquired a foreign air and objectionable manners. She had forgotten the little she had learned in France. In regard to her I had many occasions for new sacrifices. As to cleverness and judgment, she was surprising, and had the best inclinations; but there were little tempers caused by certain unreasonable contradictions, and by caresses out of place. This arose from ignorance in education. God provided for everything in her case, as I will tell.

I could hardly say anything of the interior state I then was in, for it was so simple, so naked, so annihilated that things were in me as if natural. I could only judge of them by the effects. My silence was very great, and I had at the commencement leisure to taste God without distinct consciousness, in himself (dans l'inconnu de lui-même), in my little cell. But afterwards that good Sister (as I shall tell) continually interrupted me. I gave myself up to whatever she desired of me, both from condescension and because of a certain central principle in me, which would have made me obey a child. Nothing, it seems, could interrupt me. All that tempest did not make the smallest alteration in my mind or my heart. My central depth was in a generality, peace, liberty, largeness, indestructible. And although I sometimes suffered in the senses owing to the continual upsets, that did not penetrate; they were only waves breaking on a rock. The central depth was so lost in the will of God that it could neither will nor not will. I remained abandoned, without troubling as to what I should do, or what I should become, or what would be the end of the frightful tempest, which was only commencing. The leading of providence for the present moment constituted all my guidance without guidance, for the soul in the state of which I speak cannot desire or seek a special or extraordinary providence; but I allowed myself to be led by the daily providence from moment to moment, without thinking of the morrow. I was like a child in your hands, O my God. I did not think from one moment to the other, but I reposed in the shadow of your protection without thinking of anything, without taking more care of myself than if I no longer existed. My soul was in such perfect abandonment, both interiorly and exteriorly, that she could take neither rule nor measure for anything. It was a matter of indifference to her to be in one way rather than another, in one company rather than another, at prayer, or at conversation. Before

continuing, I must tell how our Lord worked to bring me to this indifference.

While I was still in my own house, without other director than his Spirit, however possessed of him I might be, or however intently engaged in prayer, as soon as one of my little children knocked at my door, or the most insignificant person came to me, it was his will that I should break off. And once, when I was so penetrated by the Divinity that I could hardly speak, one of my little children knocked at my closet, wishing to play near me. I thought I should not break off for that, and I sent away the child without opening. Our Lord made me understand that all this was an assertion of the selfhood, and that which I thought to preserve was lost. Another time he sent me to call back those whom I had dismissed. It was necessary for me to become supple as a leaf in your adorable hand, O my God, so that I might receive all alike from your providence. Sometime they came and interrupted me for things without a shadow of reason, and that, at every moment; I had to receive them alike the last time as the first, all this being alike to me in your providence.

It is not, O my God, actions in themselves which are agreeable to you, but obedience to all your wills, and a suppleness that clings to nothing. It is by little things that insensibly the soul is detached from everything, and holds to nothing; she is suited for whatever God wishes of her, and ceases utterly to resist. O will of God, indicated by so many petty providences, how good it is to follow you, for you accustom the soul to recognize you, to cling to nothing, and to go with you into whatever place you lead her.

My soul was then, it seemed to me, like a leaf or a feather, which the wind carries where it pleases. She yielded herself to the operation of God, and all that he did externally and internally, in the same manner; allowing herself to be led without any choice, content to obey a

child as readily as a man of learning and experience, seeing only God in the man in God, who never permits the soul entirely abandoned to him to be deceived.

I cannot tolerate the injustice which most men are guilty of, who make no difficulty of giving themselves up to another man, and regard this as prudence. They give themselves up to men who are nothing, and they boldly say, "That person cannot be deceived, for he relies on such a one, who is a very honest man;" and if one speaks of a soul entirely abandoning herself to her God, and following him with fidelity, they say loudly, "This person is deceived with his abandonment." O Love and God! do you lack strength or faithfulness, or love, or wisdom to conduct those who abandon themselves to you, and are your dearest children? I have seen men bold enough to say, "Follow me; you will not be deceived or led astray." O my Love, how these people are themselves led astray by their presumption, and how far sooner would I go with him who feared misleading me, who, trusting neither in his learning nor his experience, supported himself on you alone! Such was, O my God, the Father you had given me, who was not willing to conduct souls by his own ways, but by abandonment to your divine guidance, endeavouring to follow your Spirit in them.

Immediately on my arrival at the Ursulines of Tonon, our Lord made me see in a dream two ways by which he conducted souls under the figure of two drops of water. The one seemed to me of a brilliance and beauty and clearness unequalled; the other seemed also to have brilliance, but it was all full of little fibres or threads of mud, and as I regarded them attentively it was said to me: "These two kinds of water are both alike good for quenching thirst, but this is drunk with pleasure, the other with something of disgust. The way of faith, pure and simple, is like this very brilliant and clear drop of water; it is highly pleasing to the Spouse, because it is utterly pure, without anything

of the selfhood. It is not the same with the way of illumination which does not equally please the Spouse, and is not nearly so agreeable to him."

It was then shown me that this pure way was the one by which our Lord had had the goodness to conduct me hitherto; that the way of illumination was that by which some illumined souls were proceeding, and that they had led Father La Combe into it. At the same time he appeared to me clothed with a garment all torn, and I suddenly saw that this garment was mended on me. At first was made one quarter of it, and then another quarter; then after a long interval the other half was all made, and he was clothed anew magnificently. As I was troubled to know what this signified, our Lord told me that without my knowing it, he had given him to me, drawing him to a more perfect life than hitherto he had led; that it was at the time of my attack of small-pox he had given him, and that the price to me was that illness and the loss of my younger son; that he is not merely my Father, but my son; and that the other quarter of the garment was made when, passing by the place of my residence, he was more keenly touched, and embraced a life more interior and more perfect; from which time out he has still continued; but now everything must be completed, God willing to make use of me to bring him to walk in the way of simple faith and destruction of the self: which has taken place. The next day this Father, having come to say Mass at the Ursulines, and having asked me, I did not venture to tell him anything—although our Lord very strongly urged me to do it — owing to a remnant of selfhood, which formerly would have passed for humility in my mind. However, I spoke before the Sisters of the way of faith, how far more, glorious to God, and more advancing to the soul it was, than all revelations and assurances, which still keep alive the soul in herself. This at first shocked them and him also, so much as to raise a feeling against me. I saw they were

hurt, as they afterwards acknowledged. I said no more then, but as the Father is most humble, he ordered me to explain what I had wished to say to him. I told him a part of the dream of the two drops of water; he did not, however, then take in what I said to him, the hour not being yet come. But when he came to Gex to conduct the retreats, our Lord made me know, while I was praying at night, that I was his mother and that he was my son; he confirmed the dream I had had, and ordered me to tell it to Father La Combe, and for proof of what I said, he should examine at what time he was touched with a strong contrition, and see whether it was not the time of my small-pox. Our Lord further made me know that he gave to some souls numbers of persons without their knowing it, except sometimes, and that he had given me another, to purchase whom he had taken from me my daughter; which exactly fitted in with that time.

My difficulty was to tell this to the Father, whom I hardly had any acquaintance with. I wished to dissemble with myself, and say that it was presumption, although I perceived very well that it was the self-love which desired to escape, to avoid confusion. I felt myself painfully pressed to tell it to him. I went to see him as he was preparing for the Mass, and having approached him as if for confession, I said to him, "My Father, our Lord desires me to say that I am your mother-in-grace, and I will tell you the rest after the Mass." He said the Mass, during which he was convinced of what I had said to him. After the Mass he wished me to tell him all the particulars of everything, and of the dream. I told them. He remembered that our Lord had often made known to him that he had a mother-in-grace, whom he did not know, and having asked me the time I had had the small-pox, I told him on St. Francis' Day, and that my younger son died a few days before All Saints. He recognized that it was the very time when our Lord touched him in such

an extraordinary way that he was near dying of contrition. This caused him such an interior awakening that, having retired to pray, he was seized with an interior joy and great emotion, which made him enter into what I had said of the way of faith. He ordered me to write for him what the way of faith and the way of illumination were. It was at this time and for him that I wrote the paper "On Faith," which was considered good. I have no copy; I believe, however, it is still in existence. I neither knew what I was writing, nor what I had written, no more than in the rest which I have since written. I gave it to the Father, who told me he would read it on the way to Aosta. I tell these things without order as they occur to me.

To resume my narrative, as soon as I left Gex they commenced tormenting in a strange way that good girl who had given herself to God, and on account of whom the whole tragedy was played. The ecclesiastic attacked her more vigorously than ever, and to succeed the better, he depicted me in a contemptible aspect in order that, as she has cleverness, the ridicule into which he turned me should make her lose the esteem she entertained for me, and lead her to give herself to his guidance. She still confessed to him, but she was not willing to enter into anything more special with him; on the other hand, the Sisters represented the friendship she had for me as a frightful crime. They tried to make her say what was not fact; she was persecuted incessantly. The Bishop wrote to her to put full confidence in that ecclesiastic. She said that in the height of her trouble she used to see me every night in a dream, that I encouraged her to suffer, and told her what answers she should make. As they have no vows, particularly in the matter of obedience, and she had not been forbidden, she found means of writing a note to me. They discovered her. There was nothing in it beyond a little friendship. The ecclesiastic refused her for a month both

absolution and the Communion owing to that note. The Sisters, on the other hand, caused her very great troubles, but God gave her the grace to suffer all. We could have no communications; however, our Lord still supported her.

After Easter of the year 1682 the Bishop came to Tonon. I had an opportunity of speaking to him when by himself, and our Lord caused that when I had spoken he was satisfied; but the people who had stirred him up against me returned to the charge. He strongly pressed me to return to Gex, and become Superior. I answered him that as to the Superiorship, none could be Superior without having been novice, and as for the binding myself, he himself knew my vocation, and what I had told him both at Paris and Gex; that, notwithstanding, I spoke to him as a Bishop, who held the place of God, and he should be careful to think only of God in what he should say to me; that if, holding this place, he told me to bind myself, I would do it. He remained quite confused, and said to me, "Since you speak to me in this way, I cannot advise it. You cannot go against your vocation; but I pray you confer benefit on that House." I promised to do so, and when I received my annuity I sent a hundred pistoles, intending to continue the same as long as I remained in the diocese. He withdrew, well pleased, for surely he loves good, and it is a pity he allows himself to be governed as he does. He even said, "I love Father La Combe; he is a true servant of God. He has told me things I cannot doubt, for I felt them in myself. But," continued he, "when I say this, I am told I deceive myself, and that he will be mad before six months." It was the discontented monk, the friend of the ecclesiastic, who had said that. This weakness astonished me. He told me he was very well satisfied with the nuns whom Father La Combe had conducted, and was as far as possible from finding any such thing as had been told him. I took the opportunity thereupon to say to him he should in all things rely on

himself, and not on others. He agreed. Hardly, however, had he returned, when he again took up his former suspicions. He sent me word by the same ecclesiastic that it was his opinion I should bind myself at Gex. I requested that ecclesiastic to tell him I held to the advice he had given me; that he had spoken to me as from God, and at present they were making him speak as man.

CHAPTER VIII.

My soul was, as I have said, in an entire self-surrender, and very great contentment in the midst of these violent tempests. She could do nothing but continue in her former indifference, desiring nothing even of God, whether grace or disgrace, sweetness or cross. Formerly she desired the cross with such eagerness as to be quite languishing; then she could neither desire nor choose, but received all the crosses in a uniform spirit, accepting them all with indifference from the hand of Love, whether of one description or another, severe or light: all was welcome. Those persons came and told me a hundred absurdities against Father La Combe, thinking by this to induce me no longer to follow his advice. The more they told me things to his disadvantage, the more our Lord gave me esteem for him in the depth of my heart. I said to them, "Possibly I shall never see him again, but I am quite ready to do him justice. It is not he who prevents my binding myself, but it is because this is not my vocation." They asked me who knew it better than the Bishop; and they told me I was under deception, that my state was of no account. I was indifferent to that. I could neither be assured nor uncertain. I surrendered myself as one who had nothing to think or wish, having made over to God the care of willing and executing what he wills, and in the manner which he wills.

A soul in this state has no sweetness nor spiritual relish. It would be unseasonable. She remains such as she is in her nothingness as to herself, and this is her place; and in the all as to God, without reference to, or reflection on, herself. She knows not if she has virtues, gifts, and graces in him who is the author of all that; she does not think of it, and can will nothing, and everything that concerns her is, as it were, foreign. She has not even the desire of procuring the glory of God, leaving to God the care of procuring it for himself, and she is in regard to it as pleases him. In this state God sometimes sets her to pray for some soul; but this is done without choice or premeditation, in peace, without desire for success. What does this soul, then? one will ask.

She lets herself be led by providences and by creatures without resistance. Her outside life is quite common, and as for within, she sees nothing there; she has no assurance, either internal or external, and yet she never was more assured. The more hopeless everything, the more is her central depth tranquil, in spite of the ravage of the senses and of creatures, which for some time after the new life makes some slight cloud and partition, as I have said. I should remark that the reason why there occurs a partition is because the soul is only immediately united, not yet transformed; for as soon as she is mingled and entirely passed into her original Being, there is no longer a partition. If she committed sins, she should be rejected and cast out, so to speak. No longer, then, does she find those partitions, however subtle and delicate—I mean, reflections, light and superficial assertions of the selfhood, the actual faults of a previous state, which the soul then clearly enough perceived to be partitions; as well as the impurity which came from human action, a hasty word, natural action or eagerness, which caused a mist that she could neither prevent nor remedy, nor even wish to, having so often found that her own efforts had not only been useless, but also injurious,

and that they defiled her the more owing to the state of self-annihilation in which she was.

At the commencement of the way of faith the soul profits from her defects, being by them humiliated through a reflection, simple, peaceful, tranquil, loving the abjectness which she reaps from them. The more she advances the more this simple action, without action, becomes simplified. At last there is no longer a question of this; the soul remains motionless and unshaken, bearing without movement the trouble her fault causes her, without any action whatsoever. It is what God requires from the soul from the time she is completely passive; and this is the conduct he has observed with me from the early years, long before the state of death. But, however faithful the soul to perform no sensible action to get rid of her trouble, there was yet an almost imperceptible action which the soul then did not know, and which she has become acquainted with only because she afterwards has found herself in a state exempt from this simple—nay, very simple action. It is impossible to understand me without experience. This stage is very difficult, and the soul only after many infidelities is strong in this procedure without procedure: for previously, as the fault is real, and the soul feels her impurity, she feels at the same time a secret instinct to rid herself of it; but in this degree which I am now treating, besides that she would find no remedy in anything coming from herself, it is owing to the love of her *own* excellence that she is led to exert herself. At the degree of which I speak, it is necessary that all purification come from God; one must wait in repose without perceived repose sometimes, for the Sun of Righteousness to dissipate these mists. Eventually this conduct becomes so natural that the soul has not even a desire to do anything. She leaves herself a prey to the interior burnings with an unshaken firmness; and though she should see all hell armed, she would not change the course

of guidance. It is then she says with reason, as the royal prophet, "Though I should see an army ranged in battle I would not fear, and their force would redouble my courage." She may, indeed, have a little fear in the senses, but she remains fixed and firm as a rock, preferring in her perfect abandonment to be the plaything of demons rather than secure herself by a sigh.

In this state the soul commits no voluntary fault: that is my belief; for it is not likely that, having no will for anything whatsoever, great or small, pleasant or bitter—for honour, wealth, life, perfection, salvation, eternity—she should have a will to offend God; therefore it is not so. All her imperfections are in nature, not in herself; therefore it is on the surface, and that is lost gradually. It is true our nature is so deceitful that it insinuates itself everywhere, and the soul is not incapable of sin; but her greatest faults are her reflections, which are here very injurious, as she then wishes to regard herself under pretext even of telling her state. For this reason one should be in no trouble at all to tell one's state, or to take any count of it, if God does not put into the mind what he wills one to say of it. And when the director knows the state of the soul, he does not require it; if he required it, or actual light on the subject were given him, one should do it without self-regard or reflection. The selfhood's look is like that of the Basilisk; it kills.

The same firmness which keeps her from stirring under the troubles of her defects, the soul should preserve under temptations. The Devil greatly fears to approach such souls, and he leaves them at once, no longer daring to attack them. He attacks only those who yield, or who fear him. Souls conducted by faith are not ordinarily tried by the demons; that is for souls conducted by illumination. For it is necessary to know that the trials are always suited to the state of the soul. Those who are conducted by illumination, by extraordinary gifts, ecstasies,

etc., have also extraordinary trials which are effected by the intervention of demons; for, as everything with them is in the line of assurance, the trial even is an assurance. But it is not the same with the souls of simple faith: as they are conducted by nakedness, self-annihilation, and by what is commonplace, their trial is also quite commonplace; but that is far more terrible, and destroys the selfhood more. That which causes its death for them is nothing extraordinary, it is only the disturbance of their own temperament; they are troubles they regard as veritable faults, which give them no assurance unless it be that of their total self-annihilation. These two states are found in St. Paul; he says in one place, "An angel of Satan was given to him to buffet him, that he should not be exalted above measure." Here is the trial suitable to the illumination. But as this great doctor and master of spiritual life had to experience all states, he does not remain there; he has another trial which he calls "a thorn of the flesh," to show that he has experience of all. "He prayed," he says, "three times," and it was said to him, "My grace is enough, for virtue is perfected in weakness." All this though to humiliate him, yet acted in the way of assurance. However, because these revelations were assured, he has experienced another state which he calls "the body of sin;" and this expression is admirable, for as after death the body decays only from its own corruption, so in this state it seems that the soul experiences the exhalations from the body of sin, that is, from a body corrupted by sin. "Miserable!" says he, "who shall deliver me from the body of death?"—for I feel that it is a body which carries in itself death, and to which I would be unable to give life; and then, convinced of his inability to deliver himself from so great an ill, having deplored his wretchedness, which then is without assurance and with knowledge of his powerlessness—"Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (from this body stinking and

corrupt, which I carry, though I am living)—he answers himself: "It will be the grace of God by our Lord Jesus Christ." And how do you understand that, Paul? It is that Jesus Christ, taking in me the place of my sinful and carnal man, stripping me of that old man, of that body corrupted by sin, will clothe me anew, because he has vanquished death in me, when he said, "O death, I will be thy death; hell, I will be thy destruction." When Jesus Christ shall have conquered in me death by his life, and in this wonderful duel life shall have surmounted my death, there will be no longer any sting in death, since there will no longer be any sin; and it is then that grace shall deliver me from this body of sin by Jesus Christ my Saviour.

I say, then, that the same firmness which one should have in regard to defects and temptations, so as not to give an opening to the Devil, one should have in regard to gifts and graces. In this state everything is so inward that nothing is perceived. But if anything falls upon the senses the soul is steadfast in letting the grace come and go, making no movement, however simple, either to relish or to recognize it. She leaves everything as though it was passing in another, without taking any part in it. At the commencement, and for a considerable time, the soul sees that nature wishes to take its part, and then her fidelity consists in restraining it, without permitting it the least expansion; but after the habit of restraining it has enabled her to remain immovable, and as if it were a thing that did not affect her, she no longer regards anything, she no longer appropriates to herself anything, and she lets all flow by into God in purity, as it has come forth from him. Until the soul be in this state, she always in some degree defiles by her intermixture the operation of God, like those streams which contract corruption from the places through which they flow; but as soon as the same streams flow in a pure place, they then continue in the purity of

their source. This much destroys nature, and drives it out from its abode, leaving it no refuge; but, short of experience, and unless God made known this conduct to the soul, she cannot understand it, or picture it in imagination, owing to its great simplicity. The mind is empty, is no longer traversed by thoughts; nothing occupies a certain void which is no longer painful, and the soul discovers in herself an immense capacity, which nothing can either limit or obstruct. External employments are no longer a trouble, and the soul is in a state of stability, which cannot be expressed, and which will be little understood. Oh, if souls had courage enough to allow themselves to be annihilated without pitying themselves, without looking to anything, supporting themselves on anything, what progress would they not make? But no one is willing to leave land, at most one advances some paces; but as soon as the sea is disturbed one fears, casts anchor, and often gives up the voyage. The love of the selfhood causes all these disorders. It is further of consequence here not to look to one's state, following the counsel of the Bridegroom to the bride: "Turn your eyes from me, for they make me fly away;" not only to avoid losing courage, but also because of the self-love, which is so rooted that the soul often discovers its life and the empire it would assume by a certain complaisance and preference for her state. Often, also, the idea one conceives of the grandeur of one's state makes one wish the same perfection in others. One conceives too low an idea of others; one finds it a trouble to converse with unspiritual people. It is not the same with the soul thoroughly abandoned and dead; she would rather converse with devils by the order of providence than converse with angels of her own choice.

For this reason she knows not what to choose, neither state nor condition, however perfect they may be. She is content with everything she has; she keeps herself at peace wherever she is placed, high or low, in one country or in

another; all that she has is all that is needed for her to be fully content; she could not be in trouble at the absence, nor rejoiced at the presence, of persons the most devoted to God, and who might seem most necessary to her, and in whom she has entire confidence; because she is entirely satisfied, and she has all that is needed, though everything be wanting to her. It is this which makes her not seek to see people or to speak, but receive the providences both for the one and the other, without which there is always something of the human, however fair the pretext with which we cover ourselves. The soul feels very well that all which is done by choice and election, and not by providence, instead of aiding, hurts her, or at least brings her little fruit.

But what is it which makes this soul so perfectly content? She knows not. She is content without knowing the subject of her contentment, and without wishing to know it, but content in a way that is vast, immense, independent of external events; more content in the humiliations of her own neediness and the rejection of all creatures in the order of providence, than upon the throne, by her own choice. If a sigh were needed to set her free from the most fearful place she would not give it.

O you alone who conduct these souls, and who can teach these ways, so self-annihilating, and so contrary to the ordinary spirit of devotion, full of itself and its own discoveries, conduct thus souls without number, that you may be loved purely! These are the souls which alone love you as you wish to be loved. All other love, however great and ardent it may appear, is not **PURE LOVE**, but a love mingled with something of the selfhood. These souls can no longer of themselves practise austerities, nor desire them; but they perform with indifference what they are directed to practise. They have nothing extraordinary on the outside, and their life is most common; they do not think of humiliating themselves, letting themselves be such

as they are, for the state of annihilation in which they are is below all humility. Such souls should not be judged by those who are still in the state of perfecting themselves through their exertions, for they would often take for pride the simplicity in which these persons, free from everything of the selfhood, speak of everything, and of themselves. But let them know it is not so: that these souls are the delight of God, who says, "His delight is to be with the children of men;" that is to say, these souls quite childlike and innocent. They are very far from pride, being unable to attribute to themselves aught but nothingness and sin, and they are so one with God that they see only him, and all things in him. They would publish the graces of God with the same readiness as they would tell their own paltrinesses; they tell both indifferently, according as God allows them, and as may be useful for the good of souls.

Those reserves, so good and so holy at a time when our Lord consecrates by a profound silence all his graces and the troubles (as one may see he did in my case), would be an act of selfhood for the soul of which I am speaking, for she is above herself. While the soul is still in the solitude of herself it is necessary she should be content with silence and repose; but then it is necessary for her to pass beyond that, and so strongly raise herself above herself that at last she loses herself in God, and therewith all things; and it is then she no longer knows her virtues as virtues, but she has them all in God as from God, without reference or relation to herself. It is for this reason those who are still in themselves ought not to measure the liberty of these souls, nor compare it with their own restricted action, though the latter be very virtuous and suitable to them; but they should understand that what makes the perfection of their state would be imperfect for the souls of which I am speaking.

That which makes the perfection of one state always constitutes the imperfection and commencement of the

following state. It is here as in the degrees of the sciences; he who finishes a class and is perfect in it, is imperfect in that which succeeds. He must give up the way of acting which made him perfect in his class, to enter into another quite different. St. Paul so well says, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I acted as a child." And that was the perfection of the state of childhood, which has a hundred charms; but when one is become a mature man things change their aspect. St. Paul speaks of it again in another way, when speaking of the law (which may also be applied to laws of perfection, that one imposes on himself); he says: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." That law, then, and that perfection which one imposes on himself, and which our Lord even makes us practise, is very necessary to get to Jesus Christ, but when Jesus Christ is become our life, the schoolmaster who has been so useful to us becomes useless; and if we desired still to follow him, we should not sufficiently give ourselves up to be led by Jesus Christ, and we should never enter into the perfect liberty of the children of God, which is born from the Spirit of God.

When we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit of God, he makes us enter into the liberty of his children adopted in Jesus Christ and by Jesus Christ, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty," because "he gives not his Spirit to us by measure;" for those whom he has predestinated to be his free children, them he has called, and those whom he has called he has justified. It is, then, he who operates in them that righteousness which is conformable to their call. But to what has he destined those cherished souls? "To be conformed to the image of his Son." Oh, it is here is the great secret of that call and that justification, and the reason why so few souls arrive at that state. It is because there one is predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. But some one will say, Are not all Christians called to be conformed to

the image of the Son of God? Yes, every one is called to be conformed to it in something, for if a Christian did not bear on him the image of Jesus Christ he would not be saved, since he is saved only by this character. But the souls of which I speak are destined to bear Jesus Christ himself, and to be conformed to him in all, and the more perfect their conformity, the more perfect are they. It will be seen in the sequel of what I have to write, how it has pleased our Lord to make my soul conformed to himself.

It is in these souls that God engenders his Word. He makes them bear the inclinations of that same Word, without the soul discovering in herself those same inclinations during a very long time. But when light is given either for speaking or for writing, the soul knows very well that as Jesus Christ has led a common, and apparently natural life, without anything extraordinary, except at the close of his life, such a soul also has nothing extraordinary during a very long time. The guidance of providence blindly followed constitutes all her way and her life, becoming all to all, her heart daily becoming more vast to bear her neighbour, however faulty he may be: and she sees clearly that when she prefers the virtuous to the faulty, she commits a fault by preferring a certain sympathy to the order of God. Until one has arrived at this, one is little suited for helping one's neighbour: it is only then one commences to aid him effectively. This is difficult, and one has trouble to accept it at first, because one regards this mode of acting as loss of time, defect, amusement; but the soul in which Jesus Christ lives, and of which he is the way, the light, the truth, and the life, sees these things in a different manner. She no longer finds any creature antipathetic or difficult to bear; she bears them through the heart of Jesus Christ.

It is here commences the Apostolic life. But is every one called to this state? Very few, as far as I can

understand, and even of the few who are called to it, few walk in it in true purity. The souls in passive illumination and extraordinary gifts, though holy and quite seraphic, do not enter into this way. There is a way of illumination —a holy life, where the creature appears quite admirable. As this life is more apparent, it is also the more esteemed by those who have not the purest lights. These persons have striking things in their life; they have a fidelity and a courage which astonish, and it is this which wonderfully adorns the life of the saints. But the souls which walk in this other path are little known. God despoils them, weakens them, strips them naked bit by bit, so that, depriving them of every support and every hope, they are obliged to lose themselves in him. They have nothing great which is apparent, hence it comes that the greater their interior is, the less they can speak of it, because (as one may remark from what has been said) for a very long time they can see there only want and poverty; afterwards they no longer see themselves. The greatest saints, the most interior are those of whom people have spoken least. As to the Holy Virgin, it is true there was nothing more to be said, after saying she was the Mother of God, her maternity including all the possible perfection of a pure creature; but look at St. Joseph, the Magdalen, St. Scholastica, and so many others—what is said of them? Nothing at all. St. Joseph has passed a part of his life in carpentry. What an employment for the husband of the mother of a God! Jesus Christ just the same. Oh, if I could express what I conceive of this state! but I can only stammer. I have wandered from my narrative; but I am not my own mistress.

CHAPTER IX.

Being, as I have said, at the Ursulines of Tonon, after I had spoken to the Bishop of Geneva, and saw how he changed as he was influenced by others, I wrote some letters to him and to Father La Mothe; but as I saw it was useless, and he was thereby more embittered, and the more I tried to clear up matters, the more trouble the ecclesiastic took to embroil them, I let things be, without further action. I saw the tempest about to break upon our heads without being able to prevent it. I had dreamed that I was drawing a cord which at first seemed of diamond, and afterwards appeared to me to be of iron, and at the same time seeing a terrible storm fall upon my head, I gave myself up to the mercy of the waves. I saw clearly the crosses which were springing up from every side, and my soul remained in a profound peace, waiting for the blows which she could not avoid. I had not done the least thing to draw it upon me, and I watched the torrent rushing down without having contributed to the storm. As I saw I had not contributed to it, and that there was nothing for me to do but to suffer, I kept quiet, without troubling myself as to success. One day they came and told me that this ecclesiastic had again gained over the poor girl I much loved, and who had already cost me much; at the same time they gave me a means of hindering him, but this human mode of acting was repugnant to my inmost spirit, and those words, "Except the Lord," etc., were suggested

to me. I sacrificed her as well as the rest to God. But our Lord, who had permitted this only to detach me from a love I had for her perfection, provided for the matter himself, and prevented her connecting herself with him in a manner the more admirable as it was more natural, and more contrary to their intentions. Afterwards God made this worthy girl see that he had extricated her with a quite fatherly goodness. I did not conceal from her what she had cost me, for assuredly the case was such that I would not have felt so much the death of one of my children as her destruction. While I was with her she was always vacillating, and one could not make sure of her, so that as regards her, one had to live by trust; but—O goodness and infinite power of my God, to save without us what we should lose without you!—no sooner was I at a distance from her than she became steadfast.

For me, there was hardly a day passed that they did not put upon me new insults, and make attacks quite unexpected. The New Catholics, on the report of the Bishop, the ecclesiastic, and the Sisters of Gex, stirred up against me all people of piety. I was not much affected by that. If I could have been at all, it would have been because everything was thrown upon Father La Combe, although he was absent; and they made use even of his absence, to destroy all the good he had done in the country by his missions and sermons, which was very great. The Devil gained much in this business. I could not, however, pity this good Father, remarking herein the conducting of God, who desired to annihilate him. At the commencement I committed faults by a too great anxiety and eagerness to justify him, conceiving it simple justice. I did not the same for myself, for I did not justify myself; but our Lord made me understand I should do for the Father what I did for myself, and allow him to be destroyed and annihilated; for thereby he would derive a far greater glory than he had done from all his reputation.

Every day they invented some new calumny; there was no trick or invention they did not use against me. They came to see me, to try and surprise me in my words, but God guarded me so well that they were themselves taken. I had no consolation from creatures, for the Sister who was in charge of my daughter became my greatest cross. She said I had come too late. There are persons who are only ruled by their lights, and when they do not see things succeed, as they judge only by the success, and do not like the affront of having their lights doubted, they seek elsewhere something to support themselves by. For me, having no light, I did not trouble myself about success, and I found success enough when things tended to destroy us. On the other hand, the maid I had brought, and who remained with me, gave me very great troubles; she was unhappy, and wished to return; she opposed and condemned me from morning to night, representing the wealth I had given up, and that I was useless there. She made me bear all the ill-tempers her discontent gave birth to. Father La Mothe wrote me that I was rebelling against my Bishop, that I remained in his diocese only to cause him trouble. Besides, I saw that there was nothing for me to do in this diocese as long as the Bishop should be opposed to me. I did what I could to win him, but it was impossible to succeed without entering into the engagement he desired, and that was impossible for me. This, joined to the defective education of my daughter, sometimes threw my senses into agony; but the central depth of my soul was so tranquil that I could neither wish nor resolve on anything, letting myself be as though these things had no existence. When some little ray of hope came to me, it was at once taken away, and despair constituted my strength.

During this time Father La Combe was at Rome, where, far from being blamed, he was received with so much honour, and his doctrine so esteemed that the Sacred Congregation did him the honour to take his views

on certain points of doctrine, and found them so sound and clear that it followed them. While he was at Rome the Sister would not look after my daughter, and when I undertook the care of her, she was offended; so that I knew not what to do. On the one hand I did not wish to hurt her, and on the other I endured much in seeing my daughter as she was. I urgently entreated this Sister to look after her, and not to allow her to acquire bad habits; but I could not even get her to promise me to exert herself. I thought when Father La Combe returned he would put everything to right, or would give me some consolation; not that I wished for him, for I could neither be afflicted at his absence, nor wish for his return. Sometimes I was faithless enough to desire to examine myself, and see what I might wish, but I found nothing, not even to go to Geneva. I was like the mad people who know not what is fit for them.

When it was known at home that I was at the Ursulines, and had left Gex, and that I was much persecuted, M. de Monpezat, Archbishop of Sens, who had a great kindness for me, knowing that my sister, an Ursuline of his diocese, was obliged to go to the waters for a species of paralysis, gave her his authority to go there, and also to go into the diocese of Geneva, to remain with me at the Ursulines, or to bring me back with her. On the other hand, the Ursulines of Tonon expressed a wish to adopt the constitutions of those of Paris, and that my sister should bring them. She came then, and God made use of her to bring me a maid whom he desired to give me of his own pleasure, to fashion in his mode, and to be suitable for me. My sister came to me with this good girl in the month of July, 1682. Our Lord sent her to me quite at the right moment for teaching my daughter to read, and looking after her a little. I had already taught her so that she read even in Scripture, but during the time I had left her they had given her such a bad

accent that it was piteous. My sister mended all that; but if she procured me this advantage in the care of my daughter, she caused me many crosses, for from the first she took a dislike to the Sister who looked after my daughter, and the Sister to her, so that they could not agree. I did what I could to reconcile them, but besides that I could not succeed, the very care I took made my sister believe I had more affection for that Sister than for her, which hurt her extremely; although it was not at all the case, for I had much to suffer from her myself, of which I said nothing; but it grieved me to see a disturbance where I had tasted so profound a peace. The maid I had brought, and who was discontented with that Sister and with being there, because she wanted to return to her relatives, embroiled things still more. She made my sister share in her disgust. It is true my sister practised virtue, and endured certain things which seemed to outrage reason; for she could not understand that, seeing she was a very aged Sister and a stranger, she ought to submit to a Sister still in noviciate, who was in her own House and of very humble origin. I made her see what Jesus Christ had suffered. What astonished me extremely was, that I succeeded better with my sister, who was not at all spiritual, than with the other, who thought herself very exalted in gifts and illumination, and yet whom it was impossible to make change when she had once taken up an idea.

I have learned, O my God, from her, that it is not the greatest gifts which sanctify, if they are not accompanied by a profound humility, and that death to all things is infinitely more useful to us; and this very girl, who believed herself at the height of perfection, has seen from the experiences which afterwards befell her, that she was very far from it. O my God, how true it is that one may have your gifts and be yet very imperfect and full of self; but how necessary it is to be pure and small to pass into you, O

true Life! Jesus Christ has told us with a sigh, "Oh, how narrow the gate that leads to life!" Oh, how narrow is the gate which leads to that life in God, and how necessary it is to be small and stripped of all to pass by it! But as soon as one has passed through this narrow door, which is nothing else than death to ourselves, what largeness one finds! David said, O my God, that you had placed him in a large place, and that you had saved him. Salvation is found in the loss of all things. "You have led me," he says, "into spacious places." What are these spacious places if it is not yourself, Infinite Being, principle of all being, where all beings end? But in what manner, David, have you been led into these spacious places? Through the mud, nothingness, elevation, and abasement. He says it: "You have lifted me up to the clouds, then you have broken me altogether. I have been in a depth of mud, from which I could not get out. I have been reduced to nothingness, and I have not known it." He was ignorant of himself. Is it not said elsewhere, "I am destroyed"? It is, then, through ways so bare, so annihilating, that one finds this immense largeness; it is through the "*nothing*" that one finds "*the all.*"

After Father La Combe arrived he came to see me, and wrote to the Bishop to know if he approved of my making use of him, and confessing to him as I had done before. The Bishop sent me word to do so, and thus I did it in all possible submissiveness. In his absence I always confessed to the confessor of the House. The first thing he said to me was that all his lights were deceptions, and that I might return. I did not know why he said this. He added that he could not see an opening to anything, and therefore it was not probable God had anything for me to do in that country. These words were the first greeting he gave me. They neither astonished me nor caused me any trouble, for it was a matter of indifference

to me to be good for anything, or not to be; that God wished to employ me on anything for his glory, or that he did not wish to employ me for anything—all was alike to me, whether he made use of me or of another. Wherefore these words only confirmed me in my peace. What can a soul fear which wishes nothing, which can desire nothing? If she could have any pleasure, it would be to be the plaything of providence.

The Bishop of Geneva wrote to Father La Mothe to engage him to cause me to return. Father La Mothe sent me word of it, but the Bishop assured me that it was not so. I did not know whom to believe. When Father La Combe proposed to me to return, I felt some slight repugnance in the senses, which did not last long. The soul cannot but allow herself to be led by obedience, not that she regards obedience as a virtue, but it is that she can neither be otherwise, nor wish to do otherwise; she allows herself to be drawn along without knowing why or how, as a person who should allow himself to be carried along by the current of a rapid river. She cannot apprehend deception, nor even make a reflection thereon. Formerly it was by self-surrender, but in her present state it is without knowing or understanding what she does, like a child whom its mother might hold over the waves of a disturbed sea, and who fears nothing, because it neither sees nor knows the danger; or like a madman who casts himself into the sea without fear of destroying himself. It is not that exactly, for to cast one's self is an "*own*" action, which here the soul is without. She finds herself there, and she sleeps in the vessel without dreading the danger. It was a long time since any means of support had been sent me. Untroubled and without any anxiety for the future, unable to fear poverty and famine, I saw myself stripped of everything, unprovided for, and without papers.

The first Lent that I passed at the Ursulines I had

three times a very painful affection of the eyes, for the same abscess that I had had before broke out afresh three times. The air and the badly shut room where I was, together with the Lenten fare, contributed materially thereto. It is true that all this time I suffered very severe pains, my head was horribly swollen, and with that neither help nor consolation. But what am I saying? My joy and my consolation, was it not in my pain and in the most strange desolation? Yes, surely. It was a peculiar thing to see numbers of good souls who did not know me, love me and pity me, and all the rest animated against me like mad people, without knowing me, and without knowing why they were so. For the crown of my affliction my daughter fell dangerously ill. My sister had not yet come; there was apparently no hope of her life, and then her mistress also fell ill. The doctors had exhausted their remedies. I saw everything we had hoped thereby overthrown; nevertheless, I could not suffer nor have any care for the future. My abandonment without abandonment devoured everything.

Amidst so many trials, which increased each day, and which, far from appearing on the decline, seemed only commencing—as it turned out, in fact—amidst such trials, I say, my soul continued in the same immobility. She desired neither succour nor assurance; the abandonment of creatures, and even of God, constituted all my strength, without strength of my own. O God, when you are the absolute master of a heart, it can have neither trouble nor anxiety; it is you alone who fill all its desires. The heart which you fully possess has none, and it is so peaceable that peace is all its food. It seems that this soul is herself peace. St. Catherine of Genoa had experienced this when she said that she was so penetrated with peace that it went to the marrow of her bones. This peace itself, as I have already said, is quite different from that of previous times; for formerly the peace was more savoury and more per-

ceived, but here it is no longer perceived; none the less, it is infinitely more extended, more stable, more at its source, since, as I have said, this peace is God himself. O expanse of the soul! O wonderful vastness! Thou canst indeed comprehend, but of God alone wilt thou ever be comprehended! O Love, though there should never be other recompense for the little services we render than this fixed state, above all vicissitudes, is it not enough? The senses are sometimes like vagabond children which run about, but they do not trouble the central depth, which is quite annihilated, quite stripped, no longer hindered by anything, as it is no longer supported by anything. The way by which God here conducts the soul is so utterly different from what is ordinarily supposed, that unless God himself makes it known, it cannot be understood.

When I speak of a state fixed and firm in the central depth, I do not pretend that one may no longer fall or stumble (which is true only of heaven); I call it permanent and fixed in relation to the states which have preceded, full as they are of vicissitudes and variations. Nor do I mean to exclude a state of suffering in the senses and the inferior part, or which comes from some superficial impurity, that remains to be cleansed, and that may be compared to gold which has been thoroughly purified in the substance, but which may contract some dirt on the outside. This gold no longer needs purifying in the fire, for it has undergone all the radical purification that he who uses it thought proper for the use to which it is to be put; but as it is tarnished outside, it sometimes needs to be cleaned externally. That was my then state.

There is still a suffering in this state inflicted by God himself, and which can come only from him. All external conflicts are incapable of causing the least suffering in the centre, however light; they only pass lightly and touch the skin. These souls can suffer no pains but what are inflicted by the hand of God, as was the case with Jesus

Christ; no sufferings but those God operates, either to make them conformable to him, or for the neighbour's sake, as I shall hereafter explain. The practice as from the selfhood of the least good deed, or resistance to anything God should wish of them, would be the source of terrible pains. But the self-surrendered soul, which does not resume her selfhood, has nothing to suffer in the state which she has here reached, either from men or devils, although they discharge on her all their rage. It is against such a soul that all hell is stirred up. All this, however, does not properly constitute suffering, and those enemies would have no power, if it was not given them from on high. The true suffering is the application of the hand of God as in Jesus Christ. The Father applied all the force of his arm to make him suffer. He bore the weight of all the avenging justice of a God, and it needed a God to bear the weight of a just and avenging God. It needs, therefore, a soul transformed in God to bear the weight of Jesus Christ, Man-God, crushed by the weight of the justice of his Father. These are the souls which are destined to be victims of the justice of God, to bear all its weight, and to finish "what remains wanting of the suffering of Jesus Christ." But what was wanting to your suffering, O my Lord? Has not all been finished? You have said it yourself. Oh, it was the extension of your passion in your members. The souls of which I speak bear very strong sufferings without the peace of their central depth being altered or interrupted in the very least, and that peace, however great, does not diminish anything of the force of the suffering; for it is necessary to bear Jesus Christ, Man-God, the most suffering and the most happy of men, since he was God of glory, yet suffering. There may be at the same time perfect peace and contentment, and an excessive suffering. Jesus Christ in the garden is the expression of it, where he suffered excessively from the abandonment of God the Father, and the weight of the

sins of all men. There are even sufferings so excessive that the senses weep and cry, and desire their deliverance, without, however, taking anything from that central depth of peace and unity with God's will, which is the greater as it is less perceived.

CHAPTER X.

My daughter recovered her health. I must tell how this happened. She had smallpox, and the purples. They brought a doctor from Geneva, who gave her up in despair. They made Father La Combe come in to take her confession; he gave her his blessing, and at the same instant the smallpox and the purples disappeared, and the fever left her. The doctor, though a Protestant, offered to give a certificate of a miracle. But although my daughter was restored, my crosses were not lessened, owing to her bad education. The persecutions on the part of the New Catholics continued, and became even more violent, without my ceasing on that account to do them all the good I could. What caused me some pain was that the mistress of my daughter came often to converse with me. I saw so much imperfection in these conversations, although spiritual, that I could not avoid making it known to her, and as this hurt her, I was weak enough to be pained at paining her, and to continue out of mere complacency things which I saw to be very imperfect.

Father La Combe introduced order in many things regarding my daughter; but the mistress was so hurt that the friendship she had for me changed into coolness and distance. However, as she had grace, she readily got over it; but her natural character carried her away. I told her my thoughts on the defects I perceived in her because I

was ordered to do so; and although at the moment God enlightened her to see the truth of what I said, and that she was afterwards still more enlightened, it all the same made her grow cool. The discussions between her and my sister became stronger and more bitter. Herein I admired the conduct of God and the cleverness he gave my daughter, who was only six and a half years of age: she found out by her little attentions the means of pleasing them both, preferring to do her little exercises twice over so as to do them first with the one, then with the other. This did not last long, for as the mistress generally neglected her, and at one time did things, another time not, she was reduced to learning merely what my sister and I taught her. It is true that the vivacity of my sister is so excessive that it is difficult without a special grace to get on with her; but it seemed to me that she conquered herself in many things. Formerly I had difficulty to put up with her ways, but in the end I loved all in God.

When I say that these differences caused me pain, it is a way of explaining myself, for I looked upon them, like the rest, as permitted by God; so that I was satisfied. Formerly my greatest pain would have been to cause suffering to any one, but then I should have been as content in the order of God to be the cross of the whole world, as to be myself crucified by it. I had, however, a certain instinct to soften matters, and I did it as much as I could. You had given me, O my God, a facility to bear the defects of my neighbour, and a great address for pleasing him, a compassion of his wretchedness which I had not previously. O God, you alone can give this boundless charity. I bore more easily the very great defects of imperfect souls than certain defects, which did not appear to be anything, in the souls which God wished to make perfect. I felt my heart enlarge in compassion for the former, and a certain firmness towards the others, so as not to tolerate them in defects which are all the more dangerous as they are the less

suspected, owing to their subtility. Although it seems my own abjectness ought to impose silence on me, I could not refrain from reproving these souls for their defects; otherwise I suffered much. I have suffered not a little for the imperfections of certain souls which God made me feel, and the suffering of whose purification he imposed on me. I will soon tell something of it. The more eminent in grace the soul of which we are treating, the more closely united to me, the greater also is the weight and the suffering which I bear. I see their central depth and their defects (I speak of radical defects, for the others do not astonish me, nor even cause me any trouble)—I see them, I say, as if they were externally uncovered. This sight does not diminish the esteem I have for the person, but it makes me know what is wanting to him, and often engages me to tell him.

I have no trouble in using complacence with imperfect persons: on the contrary, without knowing why, I am led to behave so with them, and I should feel guilty if I failed in it; but with souls of grace I cannot maintain this mere human action, and I cannot endure long and frequent conversations. It is a thing which few people are capable of understanding, and which is little known. Spiritual persons say that these conversations are very useful. I think that is true at one time, not at another, and there is a time when they hurt, especially when it is by choice, our human inclination corrupting everything; so that the same things which would be useful to us when God allows us to be led into them by his providence become defective when we do them of ourselves. This appears to me so clear that it seems to me if by obedience or order of providence I passed all the day with devils, I should be less wearied thereby than by being an hour with a spiritual person from human choice or inclination; and this is so true that, however dead nature may appear when it makes choice of one person rather than another (because he

pleases) to converse with unnecessarily, the soul perceives that nature has had a part in it, that she has some pain in separating from him, and that she would rather be with this person than with another—a thing which is an act of selfhood, contrary to a supreme indifference and total abandonment. When it is necessity or providence, any conformity or inclination we may have with it does no harm, for the order and will of God purify all things.

Divine providence constitutes all the rule and guidance of a soul lost in God, and as such a soul can have no eye to herself either to regard herself, or to be on her guard, she may be troubled from the fact of committing faults without being able either to foresee them, or to defend herself from them. But let her leave herself to be led by providence at every moment, and she will find that, without thinking of it, she will perform everything well, and will have all that is necessary for her; for God, to whom she has trusted herself, makes her do at each moment what he desires of her, and furnishes the suitable occasions for this. When I say that she will perform everything well, it is from God's point of view, who loves what is of his order and his will, but not according to the idea of man, or of reason, even of that which is illuminated, for God conceals these persons from all eyes in order to keep them for himself. But whence comes it, then, that souls of this degree do not cease to commit faults? It is that they are not faithful in giving themselves up at the present moment. Often, even from wishing to be too faithful, you will see very advanced souls commit many faults, which they can neither foresee nor avoid. In truth, they cannot foresee them, and it would be a lack of fidelity for them to wish to do so; and as they are in a great forgetfulness of themselves, neither can they avoid them. What then? Is it that God deserts those souls who trust in him? By no means; God would sooner perform a miracle to hinder

them from falling, if they were so self-surrendered. But they all appear to be so. It is true that they are so as to the will of being so, but they are not so as to the present moment; hence, being outside the order of God, they fall and fall again as long as they are outside this divine order, and as soon as they return to it, everything goes on very well.

And assuredly if the souls of this degree were faithful enough to allow no moment of the order of God for them to escape, they would not fall in this way. This appears to me clearer than the day. For example, a bone dislocated and out of the place where the economy of divine wisdom had placed it, does not cease to pain until it is back again in its natural order. Whence come so many troubles, so many conflicts? It is that the soul has not been willing to remain in her place, nor to content herself with what she has and what happens to her from moment to moment. It is the same in the order of grace as in that of nature. Even the Devil would suffer more out of Hell against the order of God than in Hell. Hence it comes that there is mercy even in Hell; and St. Catherine of Genoa asserts that if the soul dying in mortal sin did not find Hell, which is the proper place for her state, she would be in greater torments than those which she feels in that place, and it is this which causes her impetuosity to precipitate herself into it.

If men knew this secret they would be fully content and satisfied. But, oh, too deplorable misfortune! in place of being content with what one has, one is always wishing for what one has not. But when it pleases God to enlighten the soul on this, she commences to be in Paradise. What is it constitutes Paradise? It is the order of God, which makes all the saints infinitely content, though very unequal in glory. Whence comes it that the poor, who want everything, are so content, and that kings, who have everything in abundance, are so unhappy? It is that the man who

knows not how to content himself with what he has, will never be without desires, and he who desires anything will never be content.

All souls have desires more or less strong except those which are in the divine moment. There are even great souls which only have them almost imperceptible; others who have them so great that they are the admiration of those who know them. Some languish upon the earth because they burn to go to see God; others long for suffering—are consumed with an ardour for martyrdom; others for the salvation of their neighbour. All this is very excellent; but he who contents himself with the divine moment, although exempt from all these desires, is infinitely more content, and glorifies God more.

It is not that in the moment of suffering, since it is then the order of God, the desire of what one has does not accompany the thing itself. It is written of Jesus Christ, when he drove out from the temple those who profaned it, "The zeal of your house has devoured me," and it was in that moment the order of God that those words should have their effect; for besides then, how many times had not Jesus Christ been at the temple without such desires? Does he not say himself on different occasions that his hour was not yet come? Many saints, like St. Andrew, declare their desire for the Cross when they possess it.

The saints in heaven always desire God and always possess him. It is not properly a desire of these things, it is an appetite, which the present good gives birth to, and which, far from causing pain and inquietude, augments the pleasure of the enjoyment. This desire is looked upon as a flight, or a step forward of the spirit. The desire of the angels is an advancement in God, whence it comes that they enjoy continually and ceaselessly advance in the enjoyment, discovering new beauties in God, which ravish them, without eternity being able ever to

exhaust those treasures, ever new, of that beauty, ever ancient and ever new. They will still know what from the first they knew, and every instant there will be novelties which will charm, and will make them enter into new enjoyments. This is what the desires of the angels mean.

St. Catherine of Genoa asserts that a soul in purgatory could not desire her deliverance, for this would be an imperfection savouring of selfhood, of which these souls are not capable. They remain immersed in the divine order without being capable of reflecting on themselves. She, doubtless, means to speak of that desire which carries with it a reflection tainted by the selfhood, that regards the advantage of its own soul; this desire, being outside the divine order and disposition for those souls, would trouble their tranquillity, and place them in an actual imperfection of which they are absolutely incapable. But as to the radical instinct, which they have to return to their Centre, and which is in their nature, it is so strong, yet peaceful, that it would be capable of annihilating those souls if they were not sustained by a divine virtue. As to desires, taken as products of their will, they have none; but the instinct of union with their Origin is so strong that it is this which constitutes their true torment, hindered as they are from following it by their imperfections. For the inclination of the soul to her Centre is so strong that all the impetuosities, which we see in other inanimate creatures to return to theirs, are not a shadow of the tendency the soul has to her Goal. The reason is to be found in the eminence of the Centre, which has in itself a quality the more attracting as it is more excellent.

The excellence of God being infinite, it is easy to judge of the force of his attraction. The nobleness of the soul which tends only to her elevation, causes her to have a very powerful momentum towards her Centre, and from this infinite attraction of God, as well as from the tendency

of the soul to follow that central attraction, one may judge of the pain of souls in purgatory, who are arrested more or less, according as the obstacles, which hinder them from losing themselves in God, are more or less strong.

This is also the pain of damnation to the souls who are in Hell—a pain the greater as it is accompanied with despair of ever being able to be united to their Centre, the end of their creation; for eternally they will be attracted by God with an extreme violence, and repulsed by him with greater force. It is the severest torment of the damned—a torment inconceivable.

The cause why we do not feel in this life this heavy weight that retards and that powerful attraction for our Centre, is to be found in the body, which, while amusing itself with created objects, causes a diversion, and withdraws the attention of the soul, so that she does not feel that attracting virtue of the Centre, except by an inquietude that hinders her finding any repose on earth. A soul truly lost in God would suffer all possible pains in peace, and without any reflection on herself, as well because she would be sunk in the order and the will of God, as because, being in the central repose, she could not suffer inquietude; which, however, does not prevent suffering in itself and very strong, just as perfect self-surrender does not hinder the suffering of souls in purgatory. I believe it is the same in purification in the other life as in suffering in this. There the souls let themselves be purified by God in perfect passivity, allowing the flames to do what God commands without self-regard or reflection. Here the souls lost in God allow themselves to be purified by God without putting a hand to it, allowing themselves to be devoured by the eternal fire their faults cause them. And like as a soul in purgatory, when she has no longer anything to purify, suffers no longer in the flames, so when God by his divine activity has purified the defects of the creature, the

pain ceases, and the soul feels that she is restored to her place; and as in purgatory souls suffer more or less, according as they have more or less to purify, so in this state the soul after her fall suffers more or less, according to the quality of the fault. I have terribly digressed.

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